

In Brief

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Militant Groups Call for Boycott of India's Republic Day

**Guwahati:** Two insurgent outfits — the NSCN/GPRN and the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) — have jointly called for a complete boycott of India's Republic Day on January 26, terming it a “so-called and fake” celebration. In a statement circulated to the media, the groups announced a total shutdown (bandh) across parts of the Northeast, including Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, from 12.01 am to 6.00 pm on January 26. The joint statement alleged that the Indian state continues to project itself as a democracy while, according to the groups, denying political rights and self-determination to indigenous peoples of the region. Describing India as an “occupying power,” the outfits claimed that Assam, Nagaland and other parts of what they refer to as “Western South East Asia” were forcibly integrated into India through what they termed historically unjust and undemocratic processes.

AR commemorates 159th anniv of Vande Mataram

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Zubeen Garg death case

**Guwahati:** Garima Saikia Garg, the wife of music legend Zubeen Garg, wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi today asking for the creation of a special court to try her husband's death case as soon as possible.She stated in the letter that a Special Court is necessary to guarantee targeted decision-making and prevent procedural delays in the case. “If necessary, appointment of more prosecutors to the already deputed team by the Government of Assam, including senior and experienced prosecutors with national standing, should be considered so that the case is conducted with the highest professional competence and seriousness it warrants and to expedite the process,” stated the letter. She wants the trial to be fast-tracked through appropriate judicial and administrative measures, so that justice is neither delayed nor diluted by time.

# Thadou, Meitei leaders resolve to reinforce peace process

**Imphal, Jan 24:** In response to the deteriorating situation following the terrorist killing of Rishikanta Mayanglambam last night in Churachandpur, leaders of Thadou Inpi Manipur, along with representatives of various civil society organisations of Manipur, convened a meeting on Friday in Imphal to reinforce the peace process and strengthen the spirit of inter-community understanding that has yielded positive results so far. While condemning Kuki terrorism in the strongest possible terms, the leadership of Thadou Inpi Manipur held a cordial and constructive meeting with representatives of COCOMI, AMUCO, Arambai Tenggol (AT), and FOCS in the evening in Imphal. The meeting reaffirmed a collective resolve to jointly oppose and resist any act of terrorism and violence that threatens the unity, integrity, and progress of the state of Manipur. According to a press release of TIM, as a result of sustained community understanding and cooperation over the past more than two years, members of the Thadou community have



been able to move, reside, and live safely and freely in the valley, particularly in the state capital, Imphal. Thadou Inpi Manipur appealed to both the Thadou and Meitei communities to remain calm, exercise restraint, and continue building on the trust and mutual understanding achieved so far. It further urged members of the Thadou community to reclaim their true identity, reject destructive

and radical Kuki agendas, resist false propaganda, and place trust in the leadership of Thadou Inpi Manipur. It also called upon other ethnic communities to follow the Thadou model in the collective pursuit of peace and stability in the state. Thadou Inpi Manipur strongly condemned the brutal terrorist killing of Rishikanta Mayanglambam. The victim was abducted from his wife Chinnu Haokip's resi-

dence at Tuibong and later murdered, despite having obtained prior approval for his visit from the Kuki National Organisation (KNO)—the Kuki SoO group operating in the area—as well as from local village authorities, and despite significant presence of security personnel in Tuibong area, it said. This heinous killing in Churachandpur appears to be politically motivated and bears the hallmarks of the same

● In response to the recent terrorist killing of Rishikanta Mayanglambam in Churachandpur, Thadou Inpi Manipur leaders and civil society representatives convened a meeting in Imphal to reinforce peace efforts and inter-community understanding.

groups whose conspiracy and actions contributed to the outbreak of violence in May 2023.

Such barbaric acts of terrorism are wholly unacceptable and must be unequivocally condemned by all sections of society, it said. Thadou Inpi Manipur demanded swift, impartial, and decisive action by the authorities to identify, apprehend, and punish the perpetrators and their masterminds. The people of Manipur must not allow anti-peace terrorist groups to hold society hostage through fear and violence. It is evident that those responsible for this crime are attempting to sabotage the ongoing peace process and reignite large-scale violence that has plunged the state into turmoil for the past two and a half years, it said.

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various health concerns, and medicines were distributed at no cost. Screening for malaria cases was also carried out as part of the camp, reinforcing preventive healthcare measures in the district. The programme witnessed active participation from members of the Pherzawl Village Authority, whose support contributed to the smooth conduct and success of the camp. Meanwhile, a district-level celebration of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) Convention 2025-2026 was held to recognise the dedicated service of ASHA workers and to strengthen co-ordination in community health delivery. The convention was organised by the District Health Society, Pherzawl, and was attended by Deputy Commissioner Mannuamching, IAS, Additional Deputy Commissioner Joel G Haokip, MCS, ZEO Jangkhoahao Haokip and Chief Medical Officer Dr Hmanglamkhup Kom.

## Militant Groups Call for Boycott of India's Republic Day, Announce Bandh in Northeast

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** Two insurgent outfits — the NSCN/GPRN and the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) — have jointly called for a complete boycott of India's Republic Day on January 26, terming it a “so-called and fake” celebration. In a statement circulated to the media, the groups announced a total shutdown (bandh) across parts of the Northeast, including Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, from 12.01 am to 6.00 pm on January 26.

The joint statement alleged that the Indian state continues to project itself as a democracy while, according to the groups, denying political rights and self-determination to indigenous peoples of the region. Describing India as an “occupying power,” the outfits claimed that Assam, Nagaland and other parts of what they refer to as “Western South East Asia” were forcibly integrated into India through what they termed historically unjust and undemocratic processes.

The groups argued that true democracy rests on popular sovereignty and the right of people to decide their political future through mechanisms such as referendums. Citing examples from countries like Canada, the United Kingdom and East Timor, the statement claimed that India lacks the essential attributes of a genuine democracy. It further alleged that constitutional amendments introduced in 1971 effectively banned referendums, thereby exposing what they described as the “hollowness” of Indian democracy.



The statement also accused the Indian government of widespread human rights violations in the Northeast, particularly after the imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in 1958. According to the groups, decades of counter-insurgency operations and military campaigns have led to large-scale civilian casualties, arrests and displacement. They further alleged that recent drone and missile strikes on insurgent camps demonstrated the “violent and coercive nature” of the Indian state.

Reiterating their opposition to Republic Day celebrations, the outfits appealed to political and non-political organisations, as well as the gen-

eral public in Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, to completely abstain from official and public events linked to January 26. They urged people to avoid gatherings at government and private institutions during the bandh period.

However, the groups stated that essential services, including healthcare and emergency services, as well as the functioning of the media, would be exempted from the shutdown.

Security agencies are yet to officially respond to the statement, but heightened alertness is expected across sensitive districts in view of the bandh call and Republic Day celebrations.

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## Allegations of Chaos During Special Revision of Electoral Rolls, Three Million Applications, Only 700,000 Disposed

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** The Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls has triggered widespread chaos across Assam, with thousands of voters rushing to district commissioners', additional district commissioners' and revenue circle officers' offices to prove their eligibility. In several districts, the situation has turned volatile, resembling a war-like scenario.

Chief Electoral Officer of Assam, Anurag Goel, told Asomiya Pratidin that nearly 3 million claims, objections, corrections, transfers and deletion requests were submitted till the last date. Of these, only around 700,000 cases have been disposed of through hearings, while nearly 2.3 million applications remain pending. The process of filing claims and objections began on December 27. Hearings are scheduled to conclude by February 2, while the final electoral roll is slated for publication on February 10. With barely 10 days left for hearings, serious questions have been raised over whether such a massive backlog can be cleared in time. As feared by opposition parties, uncertainty looms over whether the names of lakhs of voters will figure in the final rolls. Allegations have surfaced that fake and motivated objections were filed

in a planned manner to delete the names of minority voters. Severe disorder was reported at the Morigaon district commissioner's office, where a woman sustained a fractured leg after being caught in a stampede-like situation. In a shocking scene, even a critically ill patient on a ventilator-equipped ambulance was brought for a hearing. Hearings at Jagiroad concluded amid chaos, while protests erupted in Tezpur after the names of 120 indigenous Muslims were reportedly deleted from the electoral rolls.

The Morigaon administration has been accused of issuing thousands of notices without disclosing the names and addresses of objectors, leading to harassment of ordinary citizens based on complaints by so-called “invisible complainants.” Clashes broke out between police and the public, leaving several injured. A woman identified as Arjina Begum of Japori sustained serious injuries after being crushed by the crowd and was admitted to Morigaon Civil Hospital. Allegations point to poor planning and lack of foresight by the district administration as the root cause of the crisis. In Morigaon and Tezpur, allegations have been raised that the names of several indigenous

Muslim families were deliberately deleted solely on religious grounds. In Tezpur's Saikia Chuburi Muslim village, the names of 120 residents were removed from the voter list. Villagers claim the three-century-old settlement is documented in records dating back to 1951 and that all residents possess valid documents.

It has been alleged that the deletions were carried out based on objections filed by a BJP worker, Moon Dekar. Even the names of a retired defence personnel and a booth level officer (BLO) were reportedly removed.

Facing sharp criticism, the Morigaon district administration issued a notice stating that allegations had been received against an individual for filing fake objections against multiple voters. If proven, action would be taken under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. However, critics have termed the notice inadequate and merely cosmetic.

Overall, the alleged chaos and harassment surrounding the Special Revision of electoral rolls has emerged as a serious cause for concern for Assam's democratic process.

# Senapati District Administration Organises Cleanliness Drive Ahead Of Republic Day

**Aizawl, Jan 24:** In preparation for the upcoming Republic Day celebrations, the District Administration of Senapati on Wednesday organised a massive cleanliness drive across the Mini Secretariat Complex and several key public locations in the district headquarters. The initiative aimed at improving hygiene and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the town. Major areas covered during the drive included the Astro Turf ground, banking offices, the multi-level

parking facility, and various public thoroughfares. Heads of departments along with their staff actively participated in the drive, taking responsibility for cleaning their respective offices and the surrounding areas. The designated zones included office buildings, approach roads, entrance gates, waiting sheds, gardens, and other public spaces. As part of the exercise, participants carried out sweeping, removal of overgrown bushes and weeds,

collection of plastic waste and litter, and proper disposal of the accumulated garbage through municipal collection trucks. The district administration stated that the cleanliness drive reflects its commitment to ensuring a clean, dignified, and welcoming environment for the national celebration, while also promoting a sense of civic responsibility among government employees and the general public..

# Assam opposition leader raises concern over ‘wrongful’ deletion of voters’ names

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** Leader of the opposition in Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia on Thursday wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner expressing concern over alleged wrongful deletion and objection of voters’ names during the summary and special revision of electoral rolls in his Nazira constituency. In the letter, the Congress leader claimed that several permanent residents of his constituency found their names excluded from the electoral rolls. Saikia alleged that local BJP leaders were involved in the removal of the names of electors who were previously enrolled in the electoral rolls and that the affected individuals were indigenously settled residents who have been living in these areas since the pre-independence period.

In several instances, the village headman (gaon pradhan) has certified in writing that the electors concerned are permanent residents and continue to reside in the villages, but despite such official certification, their names have either been removed or questioned, he claimed. During discussions with booth-level officers (BLOs), it was reported that they had no clear information regarding the reasons for such removals. “This raises serious concerns about transparency, accountability, and adherence to due process in the electoral roll revision process, particularly in the Nazira assembly constituency”, the Congress leader said.

It is significant that many of the affected voters belong to the Muslim



community, along with other indigenous residents who have lived in the area for generations, and this pattern heightens the gravity of the matter with the possibility of discriminatory practices in the revision of electoral rolls, he stated in the letter. Another matter of concern is that there are reported death cases where the elector was confirmed to be alive during verification, Saikia claimed. “Such incidents highlight grave lapses in the verification mechanism and suggest the possibility of misinformation, negligence, or serious procedural irregularities at the field level”, he alleged. Saikia urged the

CEC to ensure a comprehensive post-verification review in assembly constituencies, including Nazira, to identify instances of false, misleading, or incorrect reporting, including falsely recorded “death” cases, and to fix accountability wherever lapses, negligence, misconduct, or procedural irregularities are found. He said the results of the completed verification exercise should be carefully examined to ensure that no particular community or social groups have been disproportionately, selectively, or indirectly targeted during the electoral roll revision process. The Congress leader called for

institutional supervision and monitoring of BLOs and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) to be further strengthened so that all future revision exercises strictly comply with constitutional guarantees, statutory safeguards, and the principles of fairness, transparency, and impartiality. Natural justice, including proper notice, a meaningful opportunity of hearing, and reasoned orders passed by the competent authority, and that all electors whose names have been wrongly marked as “dead”, “absent”, or “shifted” be restored suo motu, pending final determination.

# Sikkim Police receive President’s Police Colours; become 15th state force to get the honour

**Sikkim, Jan 24:** The Sikkim Police have been conferred with the prestigious President’s Police Colours, the highest national recognition for excellence and sustained service in policing, becoming the 15th state police force in the country to receive the honour, officials said on Thursday. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs conveyed the decision on January 16 after approval by the President of India. Director General of Police Akshay Sachdeva told reporters here.

Calling the award a collective achievement, DGP Sachdeva said the honour belongs to every member of the force, from constables to senior officers, including retired personnel. “This recognition reflects the bravery of constables, the hard work of officers and the dedication of senior leadership to public service. Even retired personnel share this honour,” he said. The President’s Police Colours are not awarded annually and are conferred only on select police forces that demonstrate exemplary conduct, professional integrity and long-term commitment to public service. In the Northeast, only Tripura and Assam have received the Colours since Independence, making Sikkim the third state in the region to earn the distinction.

Highlighting the rarity of the honour, the DGP noted that for 31 years, from 1961 to 1992, no state police force in the country was awarded the President’s Colours. “This makes the honour even more significant,” he said. The President’s Police Colours, also known as the “Nishaan”, symbolise bravery, discipline and dedication, and are worn on the left sleeve of the police uniform. The award also includes a ceremonial flag measuring 3 feet 9 inches with two-inch golden fringes, designed in accordance with Ministry of Home Affairs guidelines.

The Colours may be presented by the President of India, the Prime Minister or the Union Home



Minister. A ceremonial parade will be held in Sikkim to mark the occasion, to be attended by either the President or the Prime Minister, subject to availability. As per protocol, the parade may be led by a Superintendent of Police or a Commandant, with four companies commanded by Deputy Superintendents of Police. A brass band and a pipe band will be part of the ceremony, for which the force will undertake around 20 days of preparation. Around 6,500 police personnel are part of this historic recognition, with Sikkim maintaining a police-public ratio of one police officer for every 116 citizens. Explaining the assessment parameters, DGP Sach-

deva said Sikkim’s record as one of the most peaceful states in the country was a key factor. Maintenance of law and order, prevention and detection of crime, prompt registration of FIRs — particularly in cases involving crimes against women and children — and a focused campaign against drug abuse were among the major considerations.

Founded in 1897, the Sikkim Police celebrated their 125th anniversary in 2022. Describing the award as a milestone in its long history, the DGP said the President’s Police Colours reaffirm the force’s commitment to professional and people-centric policing.

# Fresh tension in Mnp abduction & killing



**Aizawl, Jan 24:** Tensions have once again gripped violence-hit Manipur following the killing of a Meitei man, allegedly by suspected militants, in Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district. The incident has sparked widespread condemnation, protests and renewed calls for decisive intervention by the Central government to restore law and order in the state. The victim, identified as Mayanglambam Rishikanta Singh alias Ginminthang, aged 32 and a resident of Uchan Makhong Leikai in Kakching district, was reportedly kidnapped on January 21 evening from his wife’s residence in Tuibong, Churachandpur. According to police sources, armed miscreants abducted Rishikanta and his wife around 6:30 pm and took them towards Natjang village under Henglep police station. He was suspected to have been shot dead around 9:30 pm. Shortly after the killing, a video purportedly showing the shooting circulated widely on WhatsApp and other social media platforms, captioned “no peace no popular governments.” His body was later recovered from Natjang village and sent to the district morgue for post-mortem examination. Police registered a suo motu case and initiated efforts to identify the perpetrators, trace the source of the video, and establish the motive behind the crime. Family sources revealed that Rishikanta had recently returned from Nepal, where he had been working for two years, and had gone to visit his Kuki wife in Churachandpur on December 19. Reports suggested that his wife had allegedly sought prior permission from the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and its Tuibong district headquarters for his visit, though the KNO denied granting any such approval. The killing triggered protests in Kakching district on Thursday morning. Irrate locals blocked roads at several points, including the Indo-Burma-Sugunu Road at Kakching Khunou Lamkhai, burning tyres and halting vehicular movement while staging sit-in demonstrations. A public meeting that followed led to the formation of a Joint Action Committee (JAC), which submitted a memorandum to the Governor with a seven-point demand. The JAC demanded immediate arrests of those involved, handing over the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) or Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and strict punishment under the law. The memorandum also called for the arrest of Rishikanta’s wife, Chingu Haokip,

alleging her involvement in the killing. Other demands included concrete measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents, intensive operations against Kuki militants in the hills, disciplinary action against the Superintendent of Police of Churachandpur district, and accountability of Central security forces for failing to prevent the crime. The JAC warned of intensified agitations if the demands were not met within 72 hours.

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) strongly condemned the killing, accusing the Central government of failing to control armed militant groups despite the deployment of over 60,000 security personnel in the state.

Addressing a press conference in Imphal, COCOMI convener YK Dhiren described the incident as deeply unfortunate and reflective of a deteriorating security situation. He noted that the killing occurred at a time when civil society organizations were striving to restore peace and normalcy. He questioned the effectiveness of the large-scale deployment of Central forces, alleging that militants continued to operate freely with advanced weapons, leading to civilian casualties. COCOMI reiterated its demand for immediate and decisive intervention by New Delhi to restore law and order, fix accountability, and prevent further civilian deaths. Dhiren stressed that the administration under President’s Rule must take the situation seriously and act firmly to safeguard citizens’ rights. The Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM) also condemned the killing, calling it a barbaric and premeditated attack that occurred despite the presence of security forces. TIM alleged that the murder highlighted “reckless lawlessness and brutal extremism” threatening the fragile peace in Manipur. In its statement, TIM said the incident was not merely an attack on an individual but a direct assault on justice, public safety, and communal harmony. It demanded thorough investigation, swift identification and arrest of the perpetrators, and strict punishment under the law. TIM further urged the government to take urgent preventive measures to protect law-abiding citizens and prevent recurrence of such acts.

Expressing solidarity with the victim’s family, TIM called upon all communities to unite against terrorism, extremism, and radical violence, and to uphold values of justice, peace, and communal harmony.

# Khandu assures govt employees of addressing

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday assured government employees that their issues concerning the National Pension Scheme (NPS) and lateral entry into service would be addressed.

Addressing the seventh general conference of Confederation of Service Associations of Arunachal Pradesh (CoSAAP) at Pasighat in East Siang district, Khandu said the concerns related to the pension system were genuine and required careful consideration.

Khandu said he has already discussed the matter with representatives from Arunachal Pradesh and delegates from neighbouring states, and assured the employees that the issue would be raised before the Centre at both political and administrative levels.

On the lateral entry issue, Khandu said several committees had examined the issue after 2018-19, but the outcomes were not satisfactory.

He said that the matter was now being re-examined through the Administrative

Reforms Commission (ARC) to ensure that no injustice was done to any section of employees. Lateral entry into government service refers to recruitment of professionals directly into middle or senior-level positions outside of regular civil services. Highlighting the role of CoSAAP, the chief minister stressed the need for better coordination among its federating and district units. He said the government receives numerous memorandums from different departmental associations and noted that if issues were discussed and streamlined at the CoSAAP level before submission, it would save time and make the demands more practical and genuine. Describing government employees as the “permanent system” of governance, Khandu said while policymakers change, the administration continues to function through officers and staffers. The chief minister emphasised honesty, commitment and strict adherence to rules and conduct, particularly in a geographically vast and strategically sensitive border state like Arunachal Pradesh.

# Regarding the assault on a pastor, the chief minister of Meghalaya writes to his counterpart in Odisha

**Aizawl, Jan 24:** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has written to his Odisha counterpart expressing concern over reports of an incident in which a pastor was allegedly assaulted and publicly humiliated by a mob earlier this month. In his letter to Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Majhi, Sangma said India’s strength lies in its constitutional values where faith is a matter of individual conscience and disputes must be addressed strictly through lawful means.

He said incidents of mob violence in a peaceful state like Odisha are deeply distressing for citizens across the country, and more so for people of the Christian faith who believe in living with dignity and self-respect. “Mob violence cannot be allowed to replace the rule of law. Targeting persons for their faith corrodes the plural social fabric that is essential to our constitutional order,” the chief minister said. He further said acts of extremism cannot be allowed to

substitute due process as they risk creating fear and mistrust among communities. “I trust your leadership will ensure that Odisha continues to uphold justice and the rule of law,” Sangma said in the letter.

A pastor was assaulted, paraded with a garland of shoes and forced to eat cow dung on suspicion of religious conversion in Odisha’s Dhenkanal district on January 4.

## 3rd foundation day of NNMWA Kakching celebrated

**Imphal, Jan 24:** With the objective of nurturing young talents and promoting a healthy sporting culture, NN Mangang Wushu Academy celebrated its 3rd Foundation Day at the academy hall located at Turel Achouba Pareng, Moirangthem Leikai, Kakching. The programme was attended by Naorem Sanjitkumar, Caretaker Chairperson of Kakching Municipal Council and President of Kakching District Wushu Association, as the chief guest. Mayanglambam Romesh, President of NN Mangang Wushu Academy, presided over the function. The event was also graced by Ng. Sunita, DYASO Kakching, and Pukhrambam Subashchan-

dra, DYASO Tengnoupal, as guests of honour. Speaking at the occasion, Naorem Sanjitkumar stated that Manipur is a state with immense potential in the field of sports and has consistently made its mark at the national and international levels. He said that sports not only bring recognition to the state but also help shape the mindset, discipline and character of young people. However, he expressed concern that ongoing social unrest and political disturbances have adversely affected the mental well-being and progress of sportspersons at times. Emphasising the need for collective responsibility, he called upon everyone to work together to nurture



talented athletes, build a positive society and encourage young sportspersons with proper guidance and motivation. He also assured that the Kakching Municipal Council, as an Urban Local Body (ULB), would extend all possible support in this regard. It may be mentioned that Naorem Niroda, founder

of NN Mangang Wushu Academy, is currently serving as a police constable and is a dedicated coach who has trained numerous athletes. A former national and international Wushu player, he now serves as a Wushu coach and judge, contributing significantly to the sport in the state. Under

his guidance, the academy has produced one international Wushu player, 11 national-level players, and several state-level players from Kakching district. The celebration marked another milestone in the academy's ongoing efforts to promote Wushu and develop young sporting talents in the region.

## Zubeen Garg death case: Wife Garima writes to PM seeking special court

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** Garima Saikia Garg, the wife of music legend Zubeen Garg, wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi today asking for the creation of a special court to try her husband's death case as soon as possible. She stated in the letter that a Special Court is necessary to guarantee targeted decision-making and prevent procedural delays in the case. "If neces-

sary, appointment of more prosecutors to the already deputed team by the Government of Assam, including senior and experienced prosecutors with national standing, should be considered so that the case is conducted with the highest professional competence and seriousness it warrants and to expedite the process," stated the letter. She wants the trial to be fast-tracked through appro-

priate judicial and administrative measures, so that justice is neither delayed nor diluted by time. "None of the accused should be freed on bail until the complete process of justice is prevailed and the accused should be punished with severest punishment possible," Garima said. Active diplomatic and legal engagement with Singapore to monitor proceedings in the Coroner's

Court at the highest level; to ensure that all relevant materials, testimonies, and findings are made available to Indian authorities; explore all lawful avenues for mutual legal assistance, and prevent jurisdictional complexity from becoming a barrier to truth are some of her other demands. Zubeen Garg died in Singapore on September 19, 2025 while swimming in the sea.

## Manipur forces seize arms

**Imphal, Jan 24:** Central security forces and civil police in Manipur uncovered two temporary insurgent camps and seized a significant cache of firearms and explosives during anti-insurgency operations in Imphal West and Imphal East districts on Friday, police reported on Saturday. Search operations in the vulnerable and fringe areas around Ngairangbam and Khongakhul villages under Patsoi police station, Imphal West district, yielded warlike stores of weapons, including firearms, ammunition, and explosives. Although no arrests were made during the two-hour operation, substantial caches of weapons were cover.

## Tripura files suo motu case, tightens security before Republic Day

**Agartala, Jan 24:** Tripura Police have taken suo motu cognisance of the violent clash between two groups at the Katal Dighir Par area in Kailashahar and registered a case, Director General of Police Anurag Dhankar said on Saturday, asserting that those involved would not be spared. Responding

to queries on the incident, the DGP said the violence erupted suddenly following a confrontation between two groups, leading to a rapid deterioration of the law and order situation. Police intervened promptly to prevent further escalation as tensions spread across the area. The DGP said police

were compelled to resort to a lathi charge and fire blank rounds in the air to disperse the crowd and restore order. He added that such measures were taken as a last resort to ensure public safety and normalcy. He said legal action had been initiated and a detailed investigation was under way. All those involved

in the violence were being identified and strict action would be taken in accordance with the law, irrespective of position or affiliation, he said. According to police sources, the clash occurred on Friday afternoon during Saraswati Puja celebrations. Bharatiya Janata Party Kailashahar incident.

## Tree plantation drive HQ project brahmank

**Agency:** A Tree Plantation drive was conducted at HQ Project Brahmank on 23 January 2026 to mark the auspicious occasion of "Vasant Panchami and Saraswati Pooja" to educate people and society on the importance of ecology for sustenance of planet in line with the Government's initiative to promote environmental conservation and sustainable development. The programme was led by the Chief Engineer, Project Brahmank, Shri S. C. Looniya, of BRO who emphasized the importance of tree plantation in protecting the environment and improving the quality of life. He highlighted that trees play a vital role

in maintaining ecological balance, reducing air pollution, conserving biodiversity, and combating the effects of climate change. The plantation drive also aligns with the Government of India's mission for green initiatives, including afforestation, climate action, and promotion of sustainable and eco-friendly practices. Such initiatives contribute to creating a greener and healthier environment for present and future generations. The programme concluded with a pledge by all participants to protect and nurture the planted saplings and to continue supporting environmental conservation efforts in their daily lives.

## National Girl Child Day 2026 observed in Mizoram

**Aizawl, Jan. 24:** Mizoram Home Minister K Sapdanga urged departments to improve relationships and cooperation in order to provide a safe environment for girls and advance their rights and empowerment during a National Girl Child Day function on Friday. Since Saturday is National Girl Child Day, which is a state holiday, Mizoram celebrated it on Friday. Sapdanga emphasized the importance of establishing a setting that guarantees the safety of girl children regardless of their social background while speaking at the main celebration in Aizawl. The day was also celebrated in Lawngtlai along with the launch of the 100-Day Awareness Campaign on the Prohibi-

tion of Child Marriage Act at the CMO Conference Hall. The event was graced by Donny Lalruatsanga, Deputy Commissioner as the Chief Guest. Addressing the gathering, Donny Lalruatsanga extended his greetings to all participants and expressed appreciation for the well-planned programme. He emphasized that the safety, dignity, and empowerment of women and girl children are matters of global importance, which is why such observances are celebrated worldwide. Quoting the saying, "When women are empowered, the nation and society grow stronger; when women are enlightened, the world becomes brighter," he stressed the need to build a safer and more progressive world for



women. The Chief Guest noted that in earlier times, women's status in society was considerably low due to the dominance of a male-centric social structure. However, he acknowledged that the status of women has improved significantly over time. He highlighted the continuous efforts of both the Government of India and the State

## Full dress rehearsal for R-Day held in Churachandpur



**Imphal, Jan 24:** The District Administration, Churachandpur today conducted a full dress rehearsal for the 77th Republic Day celebrations at Public Ground, Hiangtam Lamka, Churachandpur. The rehearsal began with the hoisting of the National Flag, followed by march-past contingents led by Ravi Gangwar, IPS as parade commander. A total of 31 contingents in (Category A, B & C) which comprised of BSF, STC, CRPF, IRB; Civil Police; Ex-Servicemen; VDF and BSF Band Party; contingents from Category B (NCC) Rayburn High School, NCC; Churachandpur College, NCC; Bethany Christian College NCC and JNV NCC, Tuinom; contingents from various institutions (Category C), Donbosco Hr. Sec. Govt. School; JNV, Tuinom; Gandhi Memorial Govern-

ment High School; Happy Heart School; Hope Baptist Academy; New Lamka Upper primary School; Vimala Raina Government High School and Churachandpur College NSS participated in the full dress rehearsal. Deputy Commissioner, Dharun Kumar S, IAS will be the chief guest and Ravi Gangwar, IPS will be the parade commander on Republic Day celebration on January 26, which will be held at the same place. The DC will be unfurling of national Flag, take salute from the march past contingents and address the public. He also will inspect stalls set up by various departments and that will be followed by colourful cultural programme and prize distribution. Officials from district Administration, DLOs, and other dignitaries of the district attended the event.

## KTU organises worship ceremony for students

**Imphal, Jan 24:** Following the recommendations made in the seminar held on "Manipuri Khunaida Mahei Lairembigi Phida," organised by the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Khongnangthaba University, a worship ceremony on Maheigi Lairenbi (the Goddess of Learning) was organised by the university at the campus of the Kangleipak Medical and Nursing Institute. Prof. Naorem Joykumar, Vice-Chancellor, Khongnangthaba University, attended as Chief Guest, while Dr. Khaidem Jayanta Meitei presided over the programme. Prof. K. Bheigyachandra, Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, attended as Guest of Honour. In his address, Prof. Joykumar said that today's students should keep the Goddess of Learning in their hearts and minds so that they can concentrate more deeply on their studies. He emphasised discipline and respect for elders and noted that learning with such reverence will be beneficial and will also strengthen moral values.

## Security forces recover arms, ammunition in IE, IW

**Imphal, Jan 24:** Security forces recovered arms and ammunition in a search operation conducted in the foothills of the Chanung Hill Range under Sagolmang Police Station, Imphal East district. The recovered weapons include one .303 rifle with magazine, one SLR without magazine, eight SBBLs, one revolver pistol, one .22 pistol with magazine, 24 rounds live ammunition of different calibers, one MK-13T cartridge, five tube launching devices, six lathode shells, five Baofeng walkie-talkie sets with batteries and three chargers, four camouflage helmets, nine pairs of camouflage pants, five camouflage shirts, three camouflage sweatshirts, one green belt, and four camouflage hats. Security forces also recovered weapons from the adjoining areas of Ngairangbam and Khongakhul Villages under Patsoi Police Station, Imphal West district on Friday. The seized arms include one modified .303 rifle along with magazine, one local made SBBL, five pistols along with 05 (five) magazines, one air pistol, one No.36 HE Grenade, 20 .303 rifle ammunition, one Baofeng hand-held set with charger and one B.P. Jacket cover.

## Assam CM Flags Security Concerns Over Movement of Militant Leaders in Bangladesh

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday expressed serious security concerns for Assam and the Northeast, citing intelligence inputs on the movement of senior leaders of banned militant outfits in Bangladesh. Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Sarma said intelligence agencies have detected visits by top commanders of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and other smaller militant groups that are not part of any ceasefire agreement. According to him, their presence has been noticed on Bangladeshi soil in recent times. Referring to past cooperation, the Chief

Minister said peace in Assam and the Northeast had been significantly strengthened by the support extended by the previous Awami League government in Bangladesh under former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He noted that coordinated efforts between India and Bangladesh played a crucial role in curbing militancy in the region. Sarma cautioned that political changes in Bangladesh and any increase in hostility towards India could pose serious security challenges, particularly if militant groups are allowed to regroup or establish bases across the border. He highlighted that Assam shares an international border of over 800 kilometres with Bangladesh, making the situation especially sen-

sitive. The Chief Minister said the Assam government is closely monitoring developments to assess whether militant outfits are attempting to shift their bases to Bangladesh. He added that the State has been placed on high alert, with security vigilance intensified in sensitive border districts to prevent any spillover impact. Sarma also said the Assam government would formally urge the Union government to take appropriate diplomatic and administrative measures to ensure regional stability and the safety of minorities in Bangladesh. He added that States have a responsibility to flag humanitarian and security concerns that could have implications for national interest.

## Assam Trinamool Submits Memorandum to Election Commission Over Voter List Revision

**Guwahati, Jan 24:** All district presidents of the Assam Trinamool Congress on Thursday submitted memorandums to the District Election Officers, addressed to the Election Commission of India, raising concerns over the ongoing Special Summary Revision of electoral rolls. Trinamool Congress MP Sushmita Dev alleged that during the revision process, thousands of people submitted Form 7 applications seeking deletion of names of other voters. However, she claimed that many of the complainants failed to appear for hearings and could not be contacted over the phone. "This clearly shows that the exercise is being misused only to harass voters belonging to opposition parties," Dev said. She demanded that police or the administration file FIRs against those submitting false and frivolous complaints. Dev further pointed out that January 22 was the last date for filing claims and objections, while the final electoral rolls are scheduled to be published on February 2. Given the limited time frame, she said it would be impossible to



dispose of 10,000 to 20,000 objections submitted in each Assembly constituency. The Trinamool Congress has therefore urged

the Election Commission to defer the publication of the final voter list beyond February 2 to ensure a fair and thorough verification process.

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The Crisis of Indifference in Society

Indifference is one of the most dangerous emotions a society can develop. Unlike anger or disagreement, indifference is silent and slow, yet it weakens the moral core of communities. When people stop caring about injustice, suffering, and responsibility, society begins to lose its humanity. The growing culture of “it is not my problem” reflects a deep crisis where personal comfort is placed above collective concern. This attitude does not arise overnight; it grows when people feel disconnected from each other and from the idea of shared responsibility. In everyday life, indifference is visible in small actions. People ignore public cleanliness, overlook the struggles of the poor, and remain silent in the face of wrongdoing. When someone is hurt, discriminated against, or treated unfairly, many choose to look away rather than speak up. This silence encourages injustice. Indifference does not mean neutrality; it often becomes indirect support for what is wrong. Families and education systems play a vital role in shaping sensitivity. When children grow up seeing adults ignore social issues, they learn that empathy is optional. Schools must teach students not only academic knowledge but also social awareness. Activities like community service, discussions on

social responsibility, and exposure to real-life challenges can awaken compassion and involvement. Media and digital platforms also influence public attitude. Constant exposure to violence, tragedy, and conflict can make people emotionally numb. When suffering becomes just another headline, empathy weakens. Responsible journalism must encourage awareness, not desensitisation. Stories of courage, kindness, and social action can inspire responsibility and hope. Indifference in public life is particularly harmful. Democracy depends on active citizens who question, participate, and care. When people become indifferent, corruption grows, accountability weakens, and governance loses purpose. Civic engagement is not a burden; it is a duty that protects freedom and justice. Reviving concern and compassion requires effort at every level. Families must nurture sensitivity. Schools must encourage social thinking. Leaders must act with integrity and inspire responsibility. Citizens must remember that silence is also a choice, and often a harmful one. A society that cares survives. A society that becomes indifferent slowly loses its conscience. Ending indifference is essential to preserving humanity, justice, and collective dignity.

Regaining the essence of education: Self-realization, values, and skills

World Education Day serves as a significant occasion for reflection on the true essence of education, its beneficiaries, and its societal impact. India, viewed as a living civilization, perceives education not merely as a pathway to jobs or information acquisition but as a vital process for life-building, character development, and self-realization. Amidst an era defined by rapid advancements in knowledge, technology, and artificial intelligence, India’s ancient Gurukul tradition provides a valuable educational framework that could inform global leadership in these areas.

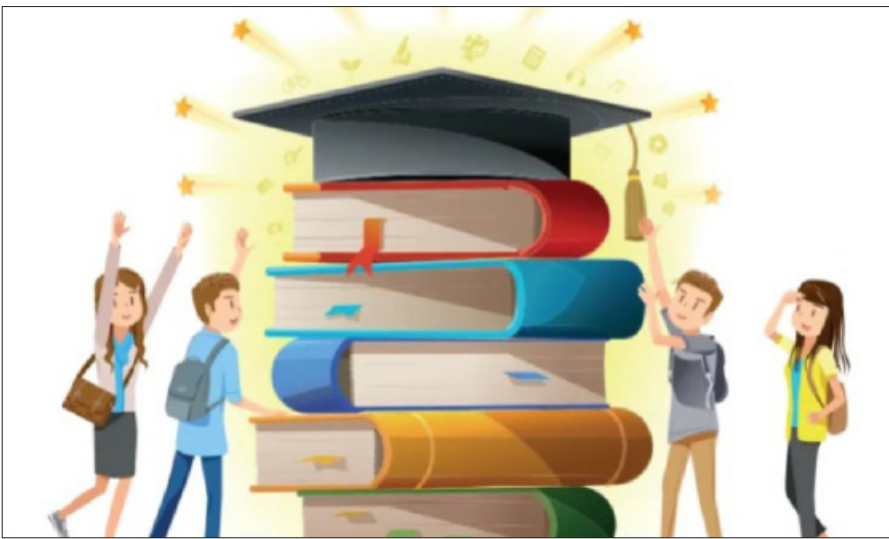
The theme for this year, “Youth Power in the Co-Creation of Education,” underscores the critical intersection between education and the promotion of peace and development. World Education Day not only reaffirms education as a fundamental right but also recognizes it as a crucial investment in the future, essential for the eradication of poverty, the achievement of gender equality, and the provision of quality education for everyone. This emphasis is particularly pressing given that millions of children and young people worldwide remain without access to education, making the engagement of youth in educational discourse more relevant than ever. This text highlights the significance of education in fostering peace and sustainable development, as recognized by the United Nations.

It positions education as a fundamental human right and a public good, emphasizing its essential role in breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving gender equality. Education is portrayed as the most crucial asset for the future, capable of guiding society towards enlightenment and preparing future leaders. The narrative references India’s ancient educational philosophy, encapsulated in the principle “Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye,” which translates to true

knowledge being that which liberates. In ancient Indian Gurukuls, education extended beyond traditional textbooks; it embodied a combination of moral conduct, discipline, harmony with nature, interactive learning between the guru and disciple, and practical life skills. Teachers were regarded not merely as subject matter experts but as insightful guides in the journey of life, while students were seen as evolving citizens with responsibilities. The Ashram system promoted a comprehensive development of students through various activities such as service, manual work, meditation, critical thinking, and hands-on experimentation. This holistic approach emphasized self-reliance, the value of coexistence over competition, and the integration of knowledge with real-life experiences, fostering a rounded personality among learners.

During the colonial period, the holistic educational system in India was systematically dismantled, primarily through Lord Macaulay’s education policy, which aimed not to educate Indians but to create “clerks” for colonial administration—individuals who appeared Indian but thought English. This strategy severed the connection between education and life, alienated language from its cultural roots, and diminished knowledge to rote learning, mark-centric evaluation, and job-oriented outcomes. Unfortunately, this detrimental framework persisted even after India’s independence, leading to an education system that, although improved in terms of the number of schools and universities, became increasingly unfulfilling.

Degrees multiplied, yet fundamental crises in skills, ethics, and innovation intensified. While independent India took strides to establish public universities, scientific institutions, and techni-



cal education, the education system progressively drifted away from addressing societal needs. Curricula became overly burdensome, examinations focused on memorization, and the interaction between teachers and students turned more formal and mechanical. Consequently, education evolved into merely a means to gain employment rather than a comprehensive philosophy of life. As a result, many educated youth today face unemployment, a lack of direction, and mental stress, highlighting the urgent need for a reevaluation and reformation of the educational approaches in India. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership, signifies a crucial shift in India’s educational landscape, moving beyond structural reform to indicate a broader ideological change. This policy prioritizes the use of Indian languages as the medium of instruction, promotes multidisciplinary learning, and seeks to liberate education from rote memorization. It emphasizes skill development, research, innovation, and moral education, redefining education’s purpose not merely as a means for employment but as a way to cultivate capable, creative, and sensitive individuals.

The NEP embodies a return to elements of the Gurukul tra-

dition, encouraging experiential learning, sports, arts, and vocational education, while aiming to break down rigid subject boundaries in higher education. Furthermore, it promotes mother-tongue education to enhance cognitive development and restore cultural confidence. The policy also aims to integrate and reposition India’s rich knowledge traditions—including yoga, Ayurveda, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy—within a global framework, signaling a commitment to not just modernize, but to culturally root the educational reform in India’s diverse heritage. However, it must be acknowledged that the gap between policy intent and ground-level implementation remains a significant challenge.

To bring about real transformation, education must truly become a hub of skill development-where students do not merely learn but can act, think, and solve problems. Education must move beyond textbooks and rote learning to become a foundation for life development. Teachers must be restored to the role of gurus-as guides, motivators, and companions in the learning journey. In the age of technological advancement, innovation, and artificial intelligence, India’s education system faces a dual challenge. On one hand, it must be

globally competitive-excelling in digital literacy, data sciences, science, and technology. On the other hand, it must safeguard human values such as compassion, ethics, and social responsibility. Education that teaches technology without wisdom risks becoming an instrument of destruction. India’s educational philosophy uniquely integrates science with spirituality, technology with philosophy, and innovation with ethics. It envisions education as a sadhana, emphasizing knowledge as a service to society rather than a mere source of power, promoting coexistence alongside competition. The principle of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,” or viewing the world as one family, serves as a crucial guiding mantra for global education today. The fulfillment of the human being and society in the 21st century transcends technical efficiency or economic advancement; it demands a comprehensive approach grounded in value-based education. This evolved educational paradigm aims to nurture individuals who are both spiritually aware and scientifically proficient, going beyond simple information dissemination to cultivate wisdom, sensitivity, and a sense of responsibility. A value-oriented framework in education enriches individual humanity, while yogic education

fosters qualities like self-restraint, balance, and inner insight. The synergy of these approaches can establish an educational system that redirects focus from self-interest towards the broader welfare of the world. Many of India’s spiritual saints and thinkers have engaged deeply with this vision of holistic education. Among them, the great philosopher-saint Acharya Shri Mahapragya presented a comprehensive educational framework through Jeevan Vigyan (Science of Living). According to him, humanity’s future depends on the harmonious development of three elements: labour, wealth, and restraint.

Labour and wealth represent the practical and material dimensions of life, ensuring social dynamism and self-reliance, while restraint represents the spiritual dimension-curbng unchecked consumption and establishing balance and peace. If education or training is not structured around these three pillars, the vision of a complete life remains merely an illusion. Therefore, the purpose of education must extend beyond employment generation to the creation of individuals who are industrious, economically conscious, and self-disciplined. This alone forms the foundation of holistic education, holistic humanity, and a holistic society.

If India can revive the spirit of its ancient Gurukul tradition in a modern context, translate the National Education Policy into ground realities, and reconnect education with life, society, and nature, it can certainly guide the world. This is not merely India’s need-it is humanity’s need. On World Education Day, India’s call to the world can be clear and compelling: let education make human beings, not machines; let it cultivate sensitivity, not just skills; and let it prepare individuals not only for the present, but also for the future.

The pharmaceutical lifeline still out of reach

On a quiet December 11 afternoon, entering the API (active pharmaceuticals ingredients) Industrial Park in Gajaria upazila of Munshiganj, located about 50 kilometres from Dhaka city along the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway, felt oddly nostalgic, like stepping into a forgotten picnic spot. Neatly paved roads lined with mango trees led us in, but the illusion quickly faded. Despite 26 plots being allocated to pharmaceutical companies, only a handful of buildings stood. The rest? Overgrown jungle. Most plots remain untouched, with minimal signs of construction or industrial activity. A few scattered workers could be seen, but the park was eerily silent – far from the hub of pharmaceutical innovation it was meant to be. For the companies who poured money into the park hoping for a brighter future, the delay has only brought frustration. “I invested in good faith. Now I’m under serious financial pressure,” said Md Halimuzzaman, managing director of Healthcare Formulations Ltd, which invested nearly Tk 500 crore in the park and is now having to pay hefty loan instalments of Tk 20 lakh per day. The vision behind the park was clear: reduce Bangladesh’s dependency on imported raw materials by fostering local production of API – the raw materials needed to make medicines. But nearly two decades since the project was approved, progress remains minimal. While land development and roads are largely complete, basic utilities like gas are still missing. Bangladesh’s pharmaceutical industry, which now meets almost all domestic demand for finished medicines and exports to more than 150 countries, has long carried a structural weakness: low local production of APIs. Currently, around 85 percent of APIs are import-

ed, mainly from India and China. For years, trade preferences and intellectual property flexibilities under LDC status softened the risks of import dependence. That protection is ending as Bangladesh graduates from least developed country (LDC) status later this year, which could fundamentally alter the cost structure and competitiveness of its pharmaceutical industry. Bangladeshi firms have invested heavily in modern formulation plants, international compliance, and complex dosage forms over the past two decades. Yet formulation alone does not ensure resilience. APIs account for a significant share of production costs. Import reliance exposes manufacturers to foreign exchange volatility, supply disruptions, and rising global prices. After LDC graduation, local firms will also no longer freely produce patented medicines without licensing under TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights). This will increase costs and reduce margins, making domestic API production more critical than ever. In 2008, the government approved a dedicated API Industrial Park in Gajaria, Munshiganj, to reduce import dependence and anchor backward integration. Nearly eighteen years later, the park has yet to come alive. The API Park, spanning 200 acres, was designed to host 42 manufacturing plots with shared infrastructure: internal roads, drainage, a high-capacity electricity substation, and a central effluent treatment plant (CETP). Clustering API producers in one zone was intended to lower entry barriers, ensure environmental compliance, and make backward integration commercially viable. More than two dozen pharmaceutical companies, including major players like Square, Beximco, Incepta, Acme, and

Ibn Sina, applied for plots. Several began investing soon after allocation, borrowing from banks to construct factories and install equipment. Despite the high ambition, the park failed to deliver. It is laid out with wide internal roads, boundary fencing and utility corridors, but most of the land remains undeveloped. Large plots stretch uninterrupted for hundreds of metres, covered in shrubs and tall grass. Power lines run along empty roads that lead nowhere. Only a handful of buildings break the uniformity of the terrain, underscoring how little industrial activity has taken root nearly two decades after the project’s approval.

The most prominent structure in the park is the CETP, built at a cost of around Tk 80 crore. Environmental compliance is mandatory for API production, which generates hazardous chemical waste. The plant was designed to serve all factories in the park, reducing individual compliance costs and ensuring regulatory oversight. The facility has never been used. With no factories operating, it sits idle, deteriorating in the open. An aerial view of the park’s infrastructure, featuring the Tk 80 crore central effluent treatment plant. Designed to handle hazardous chemical waste for dozens of factories, the facility remains unused and deteriorating. The paramount failure for the park is not having access to gas, the one utility without which API production cannot function sustainably. API manufacturing is energy- and steam-intensive. Natural gas is essential for generating steam used in chemical synthesis, distillation and purification processes. Without gas, production costs rise four to five times more. Healthcare Formulations is among the companies most affected by the delay. The

factory has been fully constructed and equipped. But production is yet to begin due to lack of necessary utilities. “We invested based on the expectation that utilities would be provided,” said Halimuzzaman. The company planned to start by producing 20 API molecules and add at least four new formulations every year. Operations have not begun because there is no gas connection.

Running the factory entirely on electricity, Halimuzzaman said, is not technically feasible and would be prohibitively expensive. Other companies face similar constraints. Several factories are partially built or fully ready but remain idle due to the lack of utilities. Abdul Muktedir, chairman and managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals, said Bangladesh’s pharmaceutical growth has been real but incomplete. “We have done well in formulation, but API remains our Achilles’ heel,” he said. “Local production is still very limited compared to national demand.” Bangladesh currently manufactures only 10 to 15 APIs domestically, out of around 200 considered essential. Incepta produces four and is developing more. According to Muktedir, early attempts at API production in the 1990s focused on basic compounds such as paracetamol and ampicillin but failed to scale due to low demand and shortages of skilled manpower. A shift began after 2010, as Bangladeshi firms entered regulated export markets and saw the strategic value of backward integration. Incepta invested heavily in scientific capacity, establishing a dedicated API research and development division in 2011 that now employs more than 100 scientists. But scaling up small-molecule API production remains constrained by energy availability. “API manufac-

turing is steam-intensive,” Muktedir said. “Without gas, using diesel increases costs four to five times. You cannot compete globally under those conditions.” He said the API Park was intended to resolve this bottleneck. “Instead, what we have is land and roads, but no gas, no steam and no functioning ecosystem.”

The timing of this failure is increasingly consequential. Bangladesh’s graduation from LDC status will end the TRIPS waiver that allows local companies to produce patented medicines without licensing. Export incentives are already being reduced, from 10 percent to 5 percent this year, with further cuts expected. Shawkat Haider, executive director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals, said these changes will place new pressure on the industry. “After graduation, we won’t be able to make new molecules freely, and rising API prices will increase medicine costs,” he said. Bangladesh’s dependence on imported APIs limits its ability to absorb these shocks. “The API Park was meant to reduce this dependence.” Some industry figures argue that Bangladesh should adopt a more selective approach to API production. Monjurul Alam Monju, former chief executive officer of Beacon Medicare, said producing every API domestically is unrealistic, particularly for specialised treatments such as cancer, where domestic demand is limited. “Developing APIs requires heavy investment and long-term commitment,” he said. “Countries like India and China can do this because of their large markets.” Instead, Monju suggested focusing on a limited range of APIs with consistent local demand, supported by targeted government incentives. However, Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the

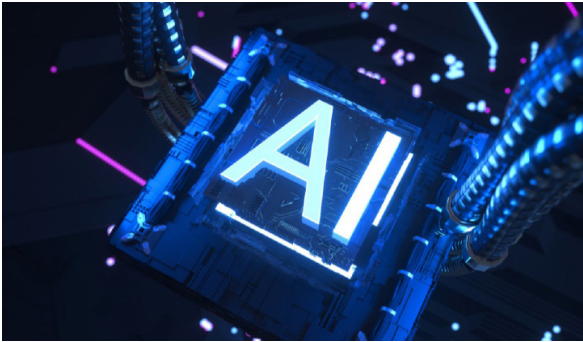
Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said API backward linkage is essential for keeping our pharmaceutical sector competitive, noting the country imports around \$1.2 billion worth of APIs annually. Rahman pointed out that Bangladesh may face immediate impacts from losing preferential trade benefits if it cannot secure an extended TRIPS waiver, which was proposed but not accepted at the WTO in December 2024. “This is a critical issue,” he stressed. Others see the problem as deeper than infrastructure. Rauful Alam, a former principal scientist at PTC Therapeutics in the United States, said Bangladesh lacks sufficient investment in drug discovery and medicinal chemistry. “Our pharmaceutical industry is heavily focused on formulation,” he said. “Without building capacity in organic chemistry and non-clinical research, true self-reliance will remain out of reach.” NO TIMELINE FOR GAS SUPPLY Officials involved in the project acknowledge the delays but cite national energy constraints. GM Rabbani Talukder, deputy general manager of the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, said core infrastructure – roads, drainage, a 20 MVA substation and gas pipelines up to plot boundaries – has been developed. “The problem is gas supply,” he said, adding that Titas Gas and the energy ministry have cited national shortages. Alternative solutions, including sustainable energy options on adjacent land, are being explored. Razib Kumar Saha, deputy managing director of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution PLC, said “There is currently no timeline for supplying gas to the API Park due to insufficient reserves.” A proposal for a coal-based power plant exists but remains at an early stage, he added.

# Within EPFO’s anticipated digital transformation AI tools and centralized operations

**New Delhi:** The Employee Provident Fund Organisation website is undergoing a major revamp — with plans for a new portal, use of AI-powered language translation tools and other facilities in the works. The reforms come days after EPFO announced liberalised withdrawal norms and heralded a UPI-linked facility for users.“There will be a complete revamp under EPFO 3.0, new architecture, core banking solution at the backend. We will be able to cater in terms of scale, to all the organised and unorganised workers. It will take into account the increase in volumes. The entire system will change including the portal. As of now, incremental changes are happening, the next phase will take care of all future needs,” an official told The Indian Express.

The retirement fund body currently has nearly 8 crore active members and maintains a corpus of around Rs 28 lakh crore.What are the changes?A senior government official told The Indian Express that the revamp will in-

clude a new portal and new software at the backend to take into account all possible expansion over the next decade. It will also incorporate AI-powered language translation tools to give information to members in vernacular languages. EPFO 3.0 will ensure a major overhaul of the EPFO technology architecture as it moves towards a core banking solution and a centralised system of operations. The changes come months after the retirement fund body began expanding its scale to cover both organised and unorganised sector workers under the new Labour Codes. EPFO is likely to hand over administration of the fund for unorganised workers — separate from the social security fund for gig and platform workers. The Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is undergoing a massive digital transformation, transitioning from traditional, regionalized, and paper-intensive operations to a, centralized, AI-driven, and user-centric platform known



as EPFO 3.0. This evolution, set to be fully implemented in a phased manner by early 2026, aims to improve service delivery for over 8 crore active members, reducing claim settlement times and enabling, real-time, online transactions.

# Increase in year-to-date flows, net foreign invesment (FDI) is negative for the third consecutive

**New Delhi:** Net foreign direct investment (FDI) remained negative for the third straight month in November, data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed, even as gross and net FDI remained higher in April-November of FY26 compared with the same period of last fiscal.The latest bulletin by the central bank pointed to high repatriation for the net FDI remaining weak, even as it moderated from the previous month. Singapore, Mauritius, the US and the UK accounted for more than half of the total outward FDI. Sector-specific breakdown suggests that more than 70 per cent of outward FDI was in manufacturing, financial, insurance and business services sectors. Net FDI stood at \$5.62 billion (provisional) between April-November compared with 0.78 billion in the same period of FY25.In FY25, net FDI had sunk to a multi-year low, led by repatriation by foreign companies and outward investment by Indian companies. Net FDI stood at \$0.96 billion according to the latest RBI data. Moreover, foreign portfolio investors continued to take mon-



ey out of Indian equities. The uncertainty surrounding the India-US trade deal and the weakening of the rupee have kept net FPI flows to India muted in recent months. After a brief phase of net inflows in October and November, FPIs registered net

outflows of \$4.2 billion in December. Debt flows also turned negative in December after a five-month period. Net FPI outflows were at \$6.6 billion in this fiscal up to January 16, 2026. The Indian economy showed resilience despite elevated geopo-

litical risks, the bulletin argued.

The year 2026 began with an escalation of geopolitical tensions, marked by developments such as the US intervention in Venezuela, the simmering conflict in West Asia, ambiguity surrounding the Russia–Ukraine peace deal and escalation of the row over Greenland, all of which point to still-elevated geo-economic risks and policy uncertainty ahead.However, the first advance estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for 2025-26 reflected the resilience of the Indian economy, driven by domestic factors such as private final consumption expenditure and fixed investment – amidst a challenging external environment, RBI said. “A strong rebound in the manufacturing sector and continued buoyancy in services are expected to boost growth in gross value added (GVA). High-frequency indicators for December suggest continued buoyancy in growth impulses. Demand conditions remained upbeat, underpinned by a resurgence in rural demand and a gradual recovery in urban demand,” the central bank said in the bulletin.

# Flights cancelled Lufthansa, KLM

**New Delhi:** A slew of top international carriers, including Lufthansa, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, and Air France, made sudden announcements regarding cancellation of flights destined to countries in the Middle East, as per multiple international reports.Multiple airport websites updated flight information online as US President Donald Trump said an American “armada” was heading to the Middle East amid rising death toll connected to Tehran’s crackdown on protesters in Iran. The MAGA leader’s claims amid a continued back-and-forth between the USA and Iran over a potential military action.As a result, flights to countries like Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia will be impacted. Air France announced that it had cancelled flights between Paris and Dubai on January 23 and January 24. It cited the “current situation in the Middle East” as the driving force behind its decision to temporarily suspend service to the emirate. Similarly, Dutch carrier KLM stopped flights headed to Dubai, Riyadh and Dammam in Saudi Arabia and Tel Aviv until further notice, as per Bloomberg. In a separate statement, the airline pressed that it was currently avoiding the airspace over several countries in the Gulf alongside Iran, Iraq and Israel. Additionally, United Airways and Air Canada cancelled their flights to Israel in light of heightened speculation that the US may strike Iran.Is a US strike on Iran imminent?



US President Donald Trump has repeatedly reiterated “help is on its way,” addressing the ongoing situation in Iran. However, he ultimately pulled back from launching any such attack on Iran weeks ago.Activists indicated the death toll related to the crackdown on nationwide anti-government protests has hit at least 5,032. The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency has even warned that the true numbers may be much higher amid the continuing weeks-long near-total internet blackout.On the contrary, the official Iranian death toll stands at a far lower level – just a little over 3,000, as per.

# Smallcap funds are under pressure; returns are resilient despite hitting low

**New Delhi:** Small-cap stocks have come under renewed pressure, with the BSE Small-cap index sliding to an eight-month low and reflecting a broader loss of momentum across riskier segments of the equity market. A mix of geopolitical uncertainty, tariff-related risks, softer earnings visibility and subdued investor risk appetite has weighed heavily on small-cap valuations, triggering a sustained correction in the segment. At the heart of the slowdown is an earnings–valuation mismatch. Profit growth among small-cap companies has remained modest despite stocks previously trading at elevated multiples. Slower nominal GDP growth, driven by low inflation, has further limited corporate profitability, as tax collections, government spending and business earnings typically move in tandem with nominal growth. Smaller companies, with relatively weak pricing power, have also faced margin compression, leaving them more exposed during periods of economic softness.What small-cap fund returns show

Despite these headwinds, fund-level performance tells a more nuanced story. Since December 2024, the BSE Smallcap index has declined sharply by about 21%. Yet, nearly 90% of small-cap mutual funds have managed to outperform the benchmark over this period, reinforcing the case for active management in the segment. While the broader index struggled, several actively managed schemes were able to cushion investor losses through selective stock picking, disciplined risk management and relatively defensive portfolio positioning. An analysis of small-cap mutual fund returns across multiple timeframes indicates that, despite the sharp correction in the segment, actively managed schemes have provided meaningful downside protection relative to broader market trends. This reinforces the case for active investing in small-cap equities.Small-cap fund returns

In the short term, the category has been under pronounced pressure. One-month, three-month and six-month returns for most small-cap funds remain in negative territory, reflecting weak market breadth, elevated risk aversion and sustained selling across mid- and small-cap stocks. The category’s average return stood at around –7.7% over one month, deteriorated to nearly –10% over three months, and slipped further to close to –12% over six months.

Importantly, performance dispersion across funds highlights the role of fund-level decisions in containing losses. While some schemes posted double-digit declines over six months, others limited drawdowns to mid-single digits, indicating relatively defensive portfolio positioning, selective exposure and disciplined stock selection. One-year performance data provides clearer evidence of downside resilience. The



category average return over this period was approximately –4.5%, notably better than the broader correction witnessed in small-cap equities during the same timeframe. Several funds managed to keep losses well below the category average, while a few delivered positive returns despite the challenging market environment. Quantum Small Cap Fund emerged as a notable outlier with a positive one-year return, underscoring the benefits of a conservative, valuation-driven investment approach. TRUSTMF Small Cap Fund and Sundaram Small Cap Fund also stood out by containing losses to mid-single-digit levels, helping preserve a significant portion of investor capital during the downturn. Overall, the data suggests that while small-cap funds are not immune to market corrections, active management has helped cushion investor losses during the recent downturn. Funds that emphasised balance sheet strength, reasonable valuations and risk control have clearly fared better, supporting the view that active strategies can add value in an inherently volatile segment. What investors should noteThe recent correction does not necessarily warrant panic selling. While volatility remains elevated, staggered investments rather than lump-sum allocations can help manage timing risk. The reopening of some schemes for fresh inflows also indicates improving opportunity visibility from a fund

management perspective.

This divergence between index-level performance and fund outcomes highlights the role of active investing in navigating small-cap volatility. Even amid a broad-based correction, fund managers focusing on balance sheet strength, valuation discipline and earnings visibility have helped limit drawdowns, offering investors relatively better downside protection during a challenging phase for the asset class. That said, small-cap investing carries distinct risks, including liquidity constraints, sharp price swings and uneven corporate governance standards. A long-term investment horizon of at least seven to ten years, disciplined investing through SIPs or STPs, and measured portfolio allocation aligned to individual risk appetite remain critical to navigating this category effectively.Longer-term data further strengthens the argument for remaining invested in quality small-cap funds through market cycles. Over a three-year period, the category delivered an average compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 18%. Five-year returns for available schemes remained firmly above 20% on average. The sharp contrast between short-term volatility and long-term wealth creation highlights the cyclical nature of small-cap investing and the importance of maintaining a sufficiently long time horizon.

# Wage revision for PSU general insurance

**Mumbai:** The central government has approved wage revisions for Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) General Insurance companies and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), along with a pension revision for retirees of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and NABARD.A total of 46,322 employees, 23,570 pensioners, and 23,260 family pensioners will benefit from the wage revision, the finance ministry said on Friday.Regarding the wage revision of PSU General Insurance companies, the ministry said, “it will be effective from August 1, 2022. The total outgo will be to the tune of Rs 8,170.30 crore, which includes Rs 5,822.68 crore towards wage arrears under the wage revision, Rs 250.15 crore for NPS, and Rs 2097.47 crore for family pension.”For NABARD, the ministry noted, “The payment revision will be effective November 1, 2022, and would entail an additional annual wage bill of around Rs 170 crore and a total payment of arrears amounting to around Rs 510 crore.”The pension revision for NABARD retirees would result in, “a one-time arrear payment of Rs 50.82 crore, as well as an additional monthly outgo of Rs 3.55 crore in pension payments to 269 pensioners and



457 family pensioners.”

In addition, the government has approved the revision of pensions and family pensions for RBI retirees. “Under the approved revision, pension and family pension shall be enhanced by 10 per cent on basic pension plus dearness relief, with effect from 1st November, 2022,” the ministry said.The total financial implication for RBI pension revision is estimated at Rs 2,696.82 crore, which includes “a one-time expenditure of Rs 2,485.02 crore towards arrears and a recurring annual expenditure of Rs 211.80 crore.

# Scott Bessent attacks Europe at Davos 2026

**Mumbai:** US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent claimed that European allies declined the joint tariffs against India for importing Russian oil to prioritise a long-negotiated free trade agreement to be finalised next week. Bessent’s sly dig at Europe comes ahead of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s visit to India to try to seal “the mother of all deals”. Calling US efforts to enforce 25 per cent penalties on third-country buyers since 2025 a “success”, he said in an interview with Politico: “I will also point out

that our virtue signalling European allies refused to do it. Because they wanted to sign this big trade deal with India.”During the interview, he also accused Europe of “financing the war against themselves” by buying Russian oil products from Indian refiners.“In the ultimate act of irony and stupidity, guess who was buying the refined products?” Bessent said. The US Treasury Secretary added, “The Europeans.”Breaking: “Our European allies have refused to put tariffs on India for buying Russian energy. That’s because they want to sign a big trade deal

with India,” claims US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent pic.twitter.com/pEPzTYoliQ During the same conversation, he hinted that the 25 per cent penalty on India could be removed. “Our 25 per cent tariff has been a huge success. Indian purchases of Russian oil have collapsed. The tariffs are still on. I would imagine there is a path to take them off now.” The US has imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including a 25 per cent penalty on its Russian oil purchases. New Delhi has repeatedly described the US action as “unfair, unjustified.

INTERNATIONAL

Hong Kong national security trial

**London:** The national security trial of three pro-democracy activists who organised an annual memorial in Hong Kong to mark the Tiananmen Square massacre opened on Thursday, in another landmark case brought under the Beijing-imposed law that has practically crushed protests in the semiautonomous Chinese city.Chow Hang-tung, Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho are charged with inciting subversion under Hong Kong’s national security law. Their trial is one of the most high-profile national security cases to be heard in Hong Kong since Beijing imposed the law in 2020. The defendants face a maximum penalty of China, the group that for decades organised the annual vigil for the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing.As they entered the courtroom, Lee waved at his supporters, who waved back and said “good morning” to him. Ho sat calmly. Chow thanked her supporters for enduring the windy weather during the night and bowed to her supporters.Minutes later, Lee and Chow pleaded not guilty, while Ho entered a guilty plea, which could help him get a sentence reduction. Until the vigil was banned in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, amid a crack-down on free expression in Hong Kong, it was the only mass memorial event for the massacre on Chinese territory. on the city.last 75 days. Videos related to the alliance’s years of work will be part of the prosecution evidence. The judges had said the court will not allow the trial to become a tool of political suppression in the name of the law.

New Zealand storms: people missing after landslide hits campsite as minister compares east coast to ‘war zone’

**Dubai:** Emergency services in New Zealand are searching for several people, including a child, believed missing after a landslide hit a campsite during storms that have caused widespread damage across the North Island.Emergency minister Mark Mitchell told RNZ that parts of the east coast looked like “a war zone”, with helicopters deployed to rescue families sheltering on rooftops from flooding, and local states of emergency declared in five regions across Northland and the East Cape due to days of record-breaking torrential rain.The landslide struck on Thursday morning at a campground in the tourist hotspot of Mount Maunganui on the east coast. Mitchell confirmed that a young girl was among those unaccounted for.“It’s a fluid and sensitive issue at the moment,” he said. “Everyone is working as hard as they can to get the best possible resolution possible, but in no doubt at all it is a very difficult and challenging situation.”Fire and Emergency NZ spokesman William Pike said the first people on the scene heard calls for help from inside the landslip.“Members of the public ... tried to get into the rubble and did hear some voices,” he said.“Our initial fire crew arrived and had the same were able to hear the same.”Footage from Mount Maunganui revealed overturned camper vans and upturned trees. Witnesses told local news outlets they heard an incredibly loud noise before seeing a large chunk of hillside hit the campsite.Alister McHardy, a fisherman who was nearby, told the NZ Herald said he heard “rolling thunder and cracking of trees”, before looking up and seeing “the whole hillside gave way”.“There were people running and screaming and I saw people get bowled. There are people trapped,” he said.Tauranga – the closest city to Mount Maunganui – received 295mm of rain in the 30 hours to 6am, before the landslide hit around 9.30am. Mount Maunganui’s population booms over summer as holidaymakers flock to the area’s beautiful beaches. The mountain, a volcanic dome at the end of peninsula, attracts tens of thousands of visitors during the same period.An Australian man, Sonny Worrall, narrowly escaped the landslide while swimming in a nearby pool. “As I’m swimming I heard this huge landslide behind me, trees cracking, there was a caravan that almost hit me. I had to dive in the next pool,” he told news outlet Stuff. “It was the scariest thing I’ve ever felt in my life,” he said.In Papamoa, south of Mount Maunganui, one person suffered serious injuries and another two people are missing after a landslide hit a home at 4am on Thursday. Police are resuming efforts to find a man in his 40s who was swept



away at a river crossing near Warkworth, north of Auckland, on Wednesday.Images soon began circulating showing flooded houses, farmland and community centres and roads cut off by landslides, and stories of harrowing escapes and incredible rescues are emerging. A community came to the aid of a 94-year-old man trapped by flood waters in Coromandel, while a woman was rescued by kayak as neck-high, fast-flowing water surrounded her

home.Tairāwhiti Fire and Emergency said it had rescued people from rooftops. Its photos showed houses inundated with logging waste, mud and water, and cars and fences largely buried.“These are not training images,” the department wrote. “This is Punaruku, Te Araroa, this morning.”Prime minister Christopher Luxon said the government was doing everything it could to support those affected by the extreme weather and thanked emergency

crews for their efforts. “All those who are putting themselves in harm’s way to keep Kiwis safe, the whole country is grateful,” he said.A tropical low is expected to bring more heavy rain on Thursday, the National Emergency Management Agency said. “Rain is falling on ground that’s already saturated, meaning impacts like fallen trees, landslides, flooding and dangerous river conditions are more likely.”

Trump declaration of Greenland framework deal met with scepticism amid tariff relief

**Dubai:** Donald Trump’s announcement of a “framework of a future deal” that would settle the issue of Greenland after weeks of escalating threats has been met with profound scepticism from people in the Arctic territory, even as financial markets rebounded and European leaders welcomed a reprieve from further tariffs. Just hours after the president used his speech at the World Economic Forum to insist he wanted Greenland, “including right, title and ownership,” but backed away from his more bellicose threats of military intervention – Trump took to social media to announce “the framework of a future deal with respect to Greenland” and withdrew the threat of tariffs against eight European countries. He later called it “a concept of a deal” when he spoke to business network CNBC soon after Wall Street closed.“The day ended better than it started,” said Danish foreign minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen. “Now, let’s sit down and find out how we can address the American security concerns in the Arctic while respecting the red lines of the Kingdom of Denmark,” he said. Italy’s prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, also welcomed Trump’s decision, but Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte, who negotiated Wednesday’s deal with Trump, issued a note of caution, saying there remained “a lot of work to be done When asked by Fox News if Greenland would remain a part of the Kingdom of Denmark under the deal, Rutte said the issue had not come up, and offered few further details about the agreement. A Nato spokesperson later stated that Rutte did not propose any compromise on Greenland’s sovereignty during his talks with Trump Trump himself gave few further details on the agreement, but said talks were continuing concerning a US missile defence shield that would be in part based in Greenland.. But there was anger from some Danish MPs, including Sascha Faxe who was angered by Greenland’s exclusion from Wednesday’s negotiations. “It’s not real negotiations; it’s two men who have had a conversation,” she told Sky News. “There can’t be a deal without having Greenland as part of the negotiations.”According to media reports, the compromise deal could see the US granted sovereignty over small pockets of Greenland where military bases are located, with unnamed officials in the Telegraph comparing the proposal to the UK military’s bases in Cyprus, which are regarded as British territory. Others pointed to wobbles on the financial markets, after Trump’s more hawkish comments on Greenland on Tuesday led to a sharp selloff on the US share markets. Global markets rebounded on Wednesday after Trump’s announced the framework deal and reneged his threat of tariffs.“The market bounced when he said we wouldn’t use force,” said Others pointed to wobbles on the financial markets, after Trump’s more hawkish comments on Greenland on Tuesday led to a sharp selloff on the US share markets. Global markets rebounded on Wednesday after Trump’s announced the framework deal and reneged his threat of tariffs. The market bounced when he said we wouldn’t use force,” said Mark Hackett, chief market strategist at Nationwide in Boston, while financial analyst Matthew Smart said “uncertainty just got priced out.”



Others noted that Trump has a history of making escalating threats, only to pull back when financial markets start falling. After he reined in his global trade war in April last year, following a rout in the markers, the Financial Times came up with the acronym “Taco” – “Trump Always Chickens Out” – to describe the phenomenon. US publication Semafor reported that Trump appeared frustrated by the turn in the markets this week, and noted that his antagonism towards European allies came with huge risks.“Countries like the UK, Belgium, and France hold trillions of dollars in US assets like treasuries. If they decide to sell those, it could send interest rates skyrocketing,” Semafor reported.In Greenland however, Trump’s announcement was greeted with serious scepticism.“He’s lying,” said one main in the capital Nuuk, who was interviewed by the AFP news agency.That sentiment was shared by care worker Anak, who told AFP “Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders. Mark Hackett, chief market strategist at Nationwide in Boston, while financial analyst Matthew Smart said “uncertainty just got priced out.”Others noted that Trump has a history of making escalating threats, only to pull back when financial markets start falling. After he reined in his global trade war in April last year, following a rout in the markers, the Financial Times came up with the acronym “Taco” – “Trump Always Chickens Out” – to describe the phenomenon. US publication Semafor reported that Trump appeared frustrated by the turn in the markets this week, and noted that his antagonism towards European allies came with huge risks.“Countries like the UK, Belgium, and France hold trillions of dollars in US assets like treasuries. If they decide to sell those, it

could send interest rates skyrocketing,” Semafor reported. In Greenland however, Trump’s announcement was greeted with serious scepticism.“He’s lying,” said one main in the capital Nuuk, who was interviewed by the AFP news agency. That sentiment was shared by care worker Anak, who told AFP “Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders. The US already has extensive access to the territory, and under the terms of multiple agreements – some going back decades – has the option to widen that access by building bases and carrying out military activities.The framework would also potentially allow the US to mine for rare earth minerals, without seeking permission from Denmark, according to the Telegraph. It remains unclear whether Denmark has signed up to the deal, but on Wednesday night Aaja Chemnitz Larsen, a Greenlandic member of the Danish parliament, said that the idea that Nato should have anything to say about the territory’s sovereignty or minerals was “completely out of the question”.After days of ratcheting tensions which signalled the deepest rupture in transatlantic relations in decades – and saw Canadian prime minister Mark Carney issue a stirring eulogy for the rules-based order on Tuesday – Trump’s reasons for apparently backing down remain unclear.Sweden’s minister for foreign affairs, Maria Stenergard, said the work of Europe’s allies has “had an effect” and she reiterated that they would not be “blackmailed”.The Dutch prime minister, Dick Schoof, called Trump’s decision to waive threatened tariffs against European allies a sign of “de-escalation”. Trump had threatened Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and Finland with tariffs of 10% from 1 February over their opposition to the US takeover of Greenland.

Half the world’s 100 largest cities are

**London:** Half the world’s 100 largest cities are experiencing high levels of water stress, with 39 of these sitting in regions of “extremely high water stress”, new analysis and mapping has shown.Water stress means that water withdrawals for public water supply and industry are close to exceeding available supplies, often caused by poor management of water resources exacerbated by climate breakdown.Watershed Investigations and the Guardian mapped cities on to stressed catchments revealing that Beijing, New York, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro and Delhi are among those facing extreme stress, while London, Bangkok and Jakarta are classed as being highly stressed. Separate analysis of Nasa satellite data, compiled by scientists at University College London, shows which of the largest 100 cities have been drying or getting wetter over two decades with places such as Chennai, Tehran and Zhengzhou showing strong drying trends and Tokyo, Lagos and Kampala showing strong wetting trends. All 100 cities and their trends can be viewed on a new interactive water security atlas.About 1.1 billion people live in major metropolitan areas located in regions experiencing strong long-term drying, compared with about 96 million in and around cities in regions showing strong wetting trends. However, the satellite data is too coarse to show details and context at the local scale.Most of the city regions in notably wetting zones are in sub-Saharan Africa, with just Tokyo and Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic sitting elsewhere. Most of the urban centres in areas with the strongest drying signals are concentrated across Asia, particularly northern India and Pakistan.Now in its sixth year of drought, Tehran is perilously close to “day zero” when no water will be available for its citizens, and last year the country’s president, Masoud Pezeshkian, said the city may have to be evacuated if the drought continues. Cape Town and Chennai have both come close to day zero and many of the world’s fastest-growing cities are situated in drying zones where they could experience future water shortages.Mohammad Shamsudduha, professor of water crisis and risk reduction at UCL, said: “By tracking changes in total water storage from space, [the Nasa project] Grace shows which cities are drying and which are getting wetter, offering an early warning of emerging water insecurity.” On Tuesday the UN announced that the world had entered a state of water bankruptcy where deterioration of some water resources had become permanent and irreversible. Prof Kaveh Madani, director of the United Nations University Institute for Water Environment and Health, said poor management of water is frequently the main cause of bankruptcy and that climate breakdown is seldom the sole reason: “Climate change is like a recession on top of bad management of business.”The World Bank Group has also been sounding the alarm. Global freshwater reserves have plunged sharply over the past 20 years, according to the group, which says the planet is losing about 324bn cubic metres of freshwater every year, enough to meet the annual needs of 280 million people, or roughly the population of Indonesia. The losses affect major river basins on every continent.By 2055, England could need to find an additional 5bn litres of water a day to meet demand for public water supply – more than a third of the 14bn litres of water currently put into the public water supply, according to the Environment Agency. Other water sectors, such as agriculture and energy, may need an additional 1bn litres of water a day.

# A train tour of Europe’s cool northern capitals: from London to Vilnius, via Berlin and Warsaw

The people queuing for the Eurostar at London St Pancras station, rushing in from the rain in hoodies, look noticeably less enthusiastic than the usual holiday crowds. But then, we aren’t heading to the usual hot, heady holiday destinations of Spain or the south of France, but boarding a train to north-east Europe. For me, it will be a journey of more than 1,000 miles – via Amsterdam, Berlin and Warsaw to Vilnius – visiting some of the coolest capitals in the north. At least in terms of temperature. As England sweltered this summer, and Spain reached a hellish 46C, it made sense to head away from the heat on what is now fashionably being called a “coolcation”. I left in August, with a suitcase full of jumpers. There is something irresistibly romantic about long train trips, watching the geography unfold outside the window. I leave London for Amsterdam on the Eurostar, eating a pain au chocolat as we speed through rural French flatlands and glide past red-roofed Belgian farmhouses, and then the distinctive, tall art nouveau buildings of the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, I switch trains to the Deutsche Bahn, grabbing a packet of Stroopwafels and jumping on board alongside cool Dutch kids with asymmetric hair. I know we have entered Germany when I spot a VW factory, and the graffiti becomes better – and more profuse.

As for my coolcation, it feels burning hot when I arrive in Berlin, emerging from the glass and steel Hauptbahnhof into a summer evening where hipsters on deckchairs are drinking cocktails at Capital Beach on the Spree River. The next morning, I stroll through the lush Tiergarten past men in black leathers chugging in the Biergarten; through the shadowy blocks of the Holocaust memorial; under the intimidating Brandenburg Gate. I’m heading to Alexanderplatz – where teenagers congregate under the TV tower – and I’m ruminating on how eastern European cities have a harsher aesthetic than those in the soft south. The remnants of the Soviet era echo in the hardness of the culture, in the brutalist architecture I’m passing, and then suddenly as pounding techno surrounds me. Marching down Unter Den Linden, I find myself caught in a procession of floats surrounded by people wearing all black, looking like they’re heading to Berghain nightclub.



My next train, from Berlin to Warsaw, is the IC Intercity link. It’s a Polish train, on which the carriages are split into comfortable six-person compartments. In one of these I sit opposite a boy with a mohawk eating paprika crisps, and I watch the city turn to pine forests of pale thin trees. Train journeys mimic cruises – you hop on and off in different cities (ideal for my ADHD) and, in between, lounge around eating too much. It’s a five-hour journey from Berlin to Warsaw, and when gazing at farmland becomes monotonous, the restaurant carriage offers distraction. I order Kotlet schabowy (€10.50), and a delicious plate of breaded pork chop, cucumber salad and floury boiled potatoes appears, which I eat surrounded by men with blond buzzcuts drinking Żywiec beers.

It’s startling to emerge from the bunker of Warsaw Central station to a horizon of glass skyscrapers reflecting the deep red sky. The next day, I discover Warsaw – a captivating juxtaposition of history and modernity. In the Old Town, I eat pierogi beside Marie Curie’s house, then explore cobbled streets with bright rows of coloured medieval buildings, which were bombed during the second world war but have been so faithfully reconstructed they have earned Unesco status. Their Disneyland-esque

quality is only lessened by the artillery pockmarks. Elsewhere, austere Soviet buildings have morphed into hipster cafes with oak counters and earthenware cups. BarStudio, below the Stalin-era Palace of Culture and Science – now reclaimed as a tourist attraction with an observation deck – runs silent-disco nights and serves matcha crepes from a menu decorated ironically with communist-era cartoons. Taking a train is far easier than flying – there’s no negotiating airport security or check-in – and soon I become dangerously casual, running and hopping onboard with a picnic of local foods.

We roll out of Warsaw and I sit munching Kopernik iced gingerbread biscuits as we pass endless farmland, the occasional dilapidated dacha, factories and small towns of Identikit modern houses in grids. Today’s journey to Vilnius will take nine hours, so it’s a relief when at Mockava, on the Lithuanian border, we are ejected on to a remote platform in a sunny forest. I stand sweltering in 26C heat, wondering why I packed so many jumpers. The black, double-height Lithu-

anian train is open-plan, modern, slick and packed full of heaving bike racks, but the dining options are disappointingly limited. I eat a sad toasted-cheese sandwich as we glide through more farmland and forests. Vilnius, although the most eastern

city I’m travelling to, feels the most western in style. Its baroque buildings – including cathedrals that survived the Soviets and have earned it Unesco status – blend into art nouveau architecture. Even former communist blocks here are painted in soft pastels, and wide boulevards (a USSR endeavour) open up a lush city. Elsewhere, meandering cobbled streets offer up cafes and pretty boutiques. The further east you go, the cheaper things get: coffees that cost €5 in Berlin and €3 in Warsaw are €2 here. But the enthusiasm for capitalism is evident in the number of luxury Lithuanian boutiques and western brands such as H&M and Mango, and a growing tech industry: Vinted is based here. Užupis, the bohemian quarter – where art exhibitions and Banksy-style graffiti adorn the streets – has its own logo: a blue hand with a hole in the middle. My guide says it shows that money falls through in an excitement to spend, spend, spend, but Užupis’s own tourism minister, Kestas Lukoskinas, has said: “The main thing is we have nothing to

hide in our hands.” Still, the heart and backbone of Vilnius is creative, a scene both historic and constantly reinvented. On Literatų gatvė (Literature Street) in Vilnius Old Town, individual wall plaques celebrate writers associated with the city, including Adam Mickiewicz, who lived on the street, Joseph Brodsky and Romain Gary. The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, where tickets start at a very reasonable £15, is matched as a cultural attraction by Lukiškės Prison 2.0 – a Soviet jail shut in 2019 and now reinvented as a creative space, with cells turned into studios and stages hosting trendy bands such as Aurora and Fontaines DC. At Mo Museum, a modern Lithuanian art gallery established by scientists and philanthropists Danguolė and Viktoras Butkus – and one of the first large-scale private collections of its kind since independence – the current exhibition, GamePlay, explores the creative impact of video games. Although I try classic Lithuanian cuisine – cepelinai (stodgy potato dumplings filled with ground meat), and pink soup (borscht with kefir) – I’m excited to find a burgeoning Michelin restaurant scene. At Ertlio Namas, a nine-course tasting menu is an affordable €70, with traditional dishes reinterpreted with modern spin: salted ide fish with jelly, bread soup with beer-braised beef, and buckwheat babka come as delicious exquisite morsels. Vilnius repeats Soviet motifs now familiar on my journey: brutalist architecture; cool young people in all black and boots; and the compulsory revamped TV tower, where you can climb to the 67th floor and take a horrifyingly scary walk on a handrail-free ledge, attached only by a rope. The journey home feels faster; the west softer, even though the train is delayed by five hours (so much for German efficiency). I wander Amsterdam hazily, the harsh and uniform brutalism replaced by the uniquely elegant canal houses and oily Van Goghs – yet I’m surprised, among the clatter and chaos, to miss the calm, clean order of the eastern European cities. I arrive back from my hot coolcation, in England – where it is raining.



## Mouth-Breathing, A Silent Lifestyle Epidemic

Mouth-breathing is often dismissed as a harmless habit or something that happens only during a cold. However, doctors are increasingly observing that chronic mouth-breathing is becoming surprisingly common. And this is especially among children, adolescents, and working adults. What was once linked mainly to nasal blockages or sleep disorders is now emerging as a quiet lifestyle-related issue with long-term health implications.

**Why Are More People Breathing Through Their Mouths?**

Modern lifestyles play a significant role. Prolonged screen time, poor posture, increased indoor pollution, allergies, chronic sinus congestion, and constant air-conditioned environments all contribute to nasal dryness and blockage. Dr Archana S, Consultant ENT Surgeon, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, says, “Over time, people subconsciously adapt by breathing through the mouth, even when the nose is structurally capable of normal breathing.” Stress and anxiety also influence breathing patterns. Shallow, rapid breathing during periods of mental stress often shifts airflow



from the nose to the mouth, reinforcing the habit.

**Why Mouth-Breathing Matters More Than We Think**

Dr Archana S says, “The nose is designed to filter, warm, and humidify the air before it reaches the lungs. Mouth-breathing bypasses this natural defence system, allowing cold, dry, and unfiltered air to enter the respiratory tract. This can

increase susceptibility to throat infections, dry mouth, bad breath, and dental issues such as cavities and gum disease.” In children, chronic mouth-breathing has been linked to altered facial development, misaligned teeth, and speech issues. In adults, it is increasingly associated with poor sleep quality, snoring, and sleep-disordered breathing.

**The Sleep Connection**

One of the most concerning consequences of habitual mouth-breathing is its link to sleep problems. Mouth-breathers are more likely to snore and experience fragmented sleep. Over time, this can contribute to fatigue, poor concentration, morning headaches, and even metabolic and cardiovascular issues. Some individuals develop positional or mild obstructive sleep apnoea, where

airflow becomes compromised during sleep.

**A Lifestyle Problem, Not Just a Medical One**

Dr Archana S says, “What makes mouth-breathing particularly concerning is how quietly it develops. Many people are unaware that they breathe through their mouths when they are sleeping or experiencing periods of concentration. The habit becomes normalised, especially in children growing up with allergies or constant nasal congestion.”

The good news is that mouth-breathing is often reversible. Identifying underlying causes such as allergies, nasal obstruction, or deviated septum is crucial. Simple measures like improving posture, staying hydrated, managing allergies, practising nasal breathing exercises, and limiting screen time before bed can help retrain breathing patterns. Mouth-breathing may seem harmless, but when it becomes habitual, it can affect dental health, sleep quality, facial development, and overall well-being. As modern lifestyles continue to alter natural body functions, awareness and early correction of mouth-breathing may prevent it from becoming a true lifestyle epidemic.

## The Collagen Question: What To Take, When To Start, And Why It Matters

Collagen has become one of the most talked-about wellness buzzwords – showing up in powders, pills, drinks, and skincare products promising firmer skin, stronger joints, and healthier hair. Yet despite its popularity, confusion around collagen remains high. Is it necessary in your 20s? Is supplementation inevitable after 40? And can taking collagen too early, or without guidance, do more harm than good? Dermatologists stress that collagen needs are not universal; they evolve with age, lifestyle, and individual health, making expert guidance essential.

**What Exactly Is Collagen And Why Does It Matter?**

“Collagen is the most abundant fibrous protein in the body. It forms connective tissues that provide structure and strength to the skin, hair, nails, joints, and bones,” explains Dr Surbhi Deshpande, Dermatologist at Zynova Shalby Hospital, Mumbai. While the body naturally produces collagen, both experts agree that this process begins to slow down with age. “Production is impacted by factors such as age, diet, stress, lifestyle, and genetics,” Dr Deshpande adds, making collagen depletion a gradual but inevitable process rather than a sudden decline. Dr Shareefa Chause, Dermatologist, Mumbai, reinforces this. She notes, “Collagen production starts to slow down from our mid-20s,” which is why fine lines, weaker nails, and joint stiffness can begin to appear earlier than many expect.

**Your 20s: Focus On Protection, Not Supplements**

In your 20s, collagen levels are typically strong. According to Dr Chause, supplements are not required at this stage, and the focus should instead be on preserving what the body already produces. Both experts recommend a nutrient-rich diet with vitamin C, antioxidants, and protein to support natural collagen synthesis. Sunscreen, hydration, regular exercise, and avoiding smoking play a crucial role in preventing premature breakdown. However, Dr Deshpande notes that early intervention may be needed in cases of poor skin quality or joint concerns – but only under medical guidance.

**Your 30s: Early Decline, Smarter Support**

By the 30s, collagen depletion becomes more noticeable. “The skin may start appearing dry, dehydrated, and less firm,” says Dr Deshpande. Fine lines and early wrinkles can surface, especially with stress and sun exposure. At this stage, Dr Chause suggests that topical products and supplements may be considered. “Topical collagen creams, serums with retinol, and oral collagen supplements can help maintain skin elasticity,” she explains, while emphasising that supplementation should be based on individual need, not trends.

**Your 40s: Visible Changes, Structured Care**

In the 40s, collagen loss accelerates. “Wrinkles, pigmentation, sagging, and thinning skin become more apparent,” Dr Deshpande says, adding that joint discomfort and reduced muscle strength may also emerge. Both dermatologists agree that a combination approach works best – nutritious diets, dermatologist-designed skincare routines, and supplements when advised. Dr Chause notes that professional treatments such as microneedling or peels may also support collagen production if suited to the individual.

**50s And Beyond: Targeted Intervention**

After 50, natural collagen production drops significantly. “Lifestyle changes alone may not be enough,” says Dr Chause, making targeted supplementation and medical guidance increasingly important. Dr Deshpande highlights the need for high-quality supplements and consistency, paired with hydration, sun protection, sleep, and a protein-rich diet to support skin, joints, and muscles. Collagen is not a one-size-fits-all solution, nor is it something to self-prescribe. Its role in wellness shifts with age, making expert consultation essential before starting supplements. When approached thoughtfully – alongside good nutrition, skincare, and lifestyle habits -collagen can support healthy ageing from the inside out, at any stage of life.

# Mira Kapoor is asked to play a part in a movie by Farah Khan



**Mumbai:** Since her YouTube career took off, Farah Khan has amassed a sizable fan base. The filmmaker-chorographer’s vlogs are highly famous, and her most recent guests were jewelry designer Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, the daughter of Neetu Kapoor, and entrepreneur Shahid Kapoor’s wife Mira Kapoor.

During this occasion, Farah praised Mira’s laid-back yet glitzy appearance and declared that she ought to be a “heroine.””Mira, you can become a heroine,” Farah Khan encourages Mira Kapoor in her most recent vlog. Play a part in my movie.



Mira blushed significantly at the compliment and graciously declined the offer.

In her most recent vlog, Farah Khan, the director of well-known Bollywood movies like Main Hoon Na, Om Shanti Om, and Tees Maar Khan, provided an update. She disclosed that she intends to start her next directing project by the end of this year when visiting the Mumbai residence of actor Nakuul Mehta.”Abhi banaungi main!” she exclaimed. Abhi bachche chaley jayenge na college fir banaungi! ‘Wapas Aao Farah Khan’ (I will make a film soon!) is an online

petition. I will make it after my children graduate from college. I have an entire petition to get back on track! I believe it’s time, and I want to begin at the end of this year.”

Additionally, Farah stated that she will work with Shah Rukh Khan if she decides to go back into directing. “I’ll work with Shah Rukh if I decide to make a movie! If not, I’ll wait and watch YouTube,” Farah remarked.In July 2015, Mira Kapoor wed Shahid Kapoor. They are fortunate to have two children: a son named Zain and a girl named Mishra. Mira is a prosperous businesswoman as well.

# How Haq Discovered an Unexpected Audience in Nigeria and Pakistan

**Mumbai:** It was widely anticipated that Haq would provoke discussion in India when it debuted on Netflix earlier this month.

The film explores Muslim women’s right to maintenance via the story of Shazia, played by Yami Gautam, who is embroiled in a painful legal and emotional battle with her husband, played by Emraan Hashmi. It is a courtroom drama based by the historic 1985 Shah Bano case.Few people expected the movie to have such a strong impact outside of India.In Pakistan and Nigeria, two nations with very distinct cultural landscapes but remarkably comparable talks about faith, law, marriage, and women’s rights, Haq has discovered an unexpectedly vociferous and passionately devoted audience in the weeks since its January 2, 2026 OTT release. Haq, which was directed by Suparn S. Varma, started at number one on Netflix India and swiftly rose to number two among non-English movies worldwide. With 4.5 million views in just its second week, the movie maintained its ranking against more expensive and established films.India’s reaction was mostly influenced by the film’s moderation. Haq uses lived-in performances, moral ambiguity, and courtroom tension. Hashmi’s disturbing transformation into a cunning spouse was praised for its disconcerting reality, while Gautam’s Shazia is neither softened nor sainted.

Alia Bhatt, Kiara Advani, Farah



Khan, and Karan Johar were among the celebrities that openly praised the movie. Gautam called the audience’s reaction “overwhelming,” and Varma talked about the constant messages that came in after the movie’s premiere, many of which came from outside of India. Haq started to trend on Netflix Pakistan within days after its breakthrough in India, and it quickly rose to the top of the platform’s charts. Particularly on social media, where Pakistani celebrities, attorneys, influencers, and fans expressed their opinions, the response was quick and passionate.Not only were the performances praised, but the film’s treatment of Islamic law, divorce, and women’s rights surprised me the most.”The emotional depth of this film is profoundly uplifting, it inspires me to tears, Yami

Gautam!” commented Pakistani actor, writer, and producer Fazila Qazi on Instagram. You were outstanding! In a far more critical analysis, actor, influencer, and attorney Maryam Noor contrasted Haq with Pakistani television dramas, saying, “Haq was made by Indian Hindus, but it explains the Quran, family system, and divorce with more correctness than our own dramas.” Sadly, many people in our sector still announce divorces in the incorrect manner. Why are we still misguided after they discovered this years ago? A must-see for couples.

Haq’s reception in Pakistan and Nigeria is especially noteworthy because it cuts over linguistic and national boundaries. The film taps a nerve that feels universal across countries where faith, family, and patriarchy collide,

## Sunny Deol's movie earns more on opening day



**New Delhi:** At the box office, Border 2 has had a great start.According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the movie made Rs 30 crore on its first day in India and received mostly excellent reviews.

On opening day, the war drama had an overall occupancy of 32.1%, with the most people attending night shows. According to trade sources, it was screened in about 6,000 shows nationwide, including 1,015 in Mumbai and 1,524 in the Delhi-NCR area.

The movie’s opening is similar to that of Dhurandhar, which debuted on December 5 and made Rs 28 crore with 6,146 shows throughout the country on its first day. Due to strong word-of-mouth, that movie continued to rise steadily over its first weekend. A similar pattern is anticipated for Border 2, especially in light of the audience’s description of it as a “epic war drama.”For Varun Dhawan, Ahan Shetty, and Diljit Dosanjh, Border 2 has emerged as the most significant turning point in their careers. However, Gadar 2, which has made Rs 686 crore globally, continues to be Sunny Deol’s best opening and highest-grossing movie. With Rs 388 crore, Dilwale (2015) is still Varun Dhawan’s highest grossing film worldwide.Additionally, the movie is Varun Dhawan’s first hit at the box office since Bhediya (2023). This is the first successful theatrical release for Ahan Shetty, who made his debut with Tadap in 2021.

Sonam Bajwa and Mona Singh have important parts in Border 2, which is directed by Anurag Singh and produced by JP and Nidhi Dutta.After the release of Border 2, Dhurandhar’s run has faltered, with the movie making less than Rs 1 crore for the first time in almost 50 days.

# Abhinav Shukla Chastises Troll for Body-Shaming Ira Khan Due to Her Mumbai Marathon Clothes

**Mumbai:** Ira Khan, the daughter of Aamir Khan, was subjected to body-shaming following her participation in the Tata Mumbai Marathon on January 18. Fitness trainer Nupur Shikhare, the spouse of Aamir and Ira, participated in the event, which was held in favor of the Paani Foundation and Agatsu Foundation.An X user made critical comments about Ira’s marathon gear, which included black shorts and a white tank top. “This is Ira Khan, Aamir Khan’s daughter. The body is the issue, not the clothing. I don’t understand why some people chose to walk around looking indecent despite refusing to dress appropriately for their body type. Decency is always in style. The user commented, “Only XL and XXL can have a problem with this post of mine.” Actor Abhinav Shukla has since responded to the re-



mark with vigor. “One Star Kid who is real and down to earth, she does not act entitled, no drama, no show off, and no entourage of five bouncers and managers,” the actor revealed. She travels in a rickshaw with her brother most of the time, dressed like typical children. At least she’s making an attempt to be active. Dressing is entirely a matter of personal preference.Ira Khan has always been outspoken about her own battles with body image. Ira said, “Yes, I’m fat,” in her caption. Since 2020, I’ve been vacillating



between being overweight and obese and believing that I’m big or unfit.

There is a lot to say about it, and there are undoubtedly things I still need to work out. However, I sense at least a slight improvement, therefore I’ve made the decision to start sharing and discussing it. I might not be as confident or expressive as I was when I talked about my depression. This feels a little frightening in contrast to that.In other news, on January 3, Ira Khan and Nupur Shikhare commemorated their second wedding anniversary.

## Homebound Misses Oscars 2026 Nomination: Vishal Jethwa Responds



**Mumbai:** After his film Homebound was left off of the final Oscar list, actor Vishal Jethwa voiced his sadness. Vishal acknowledged his heartbreak in a social media message, but he also expressed pride in having “tried” and made it to the top 15.

Vishal posted a touching message on social media, saying, “Homebound Oscars.” Yes, we were unable to qualify for the Oscars nominations, which nat-

urally dashed our hopes. However, I think failure is more about not trying than it is about failing. And from the first day on, the Homebound team did nothing but TRY. He added, “I am proud of the fact that we could make it to the top 15 and am fully satisfied with what we were able to do, having our name associated with the prestigious name called the Oscars. It’s more than what I ever imagined, desired,

or deserved.” Vishal wrote, “Will always be grateful to Jogi sir, Neeraj sir, and Karan sir.” Ishaan, Janhvi, and my homebound family have my love and respect. I am now adhering to the life motto that my Guruji, Shoaib Khan sir, gave me. “Thank you, BHAGWAN,” Vishal wrote, adding a well-known inspirational couplet.The filmmakers of Homebound, Karan Johar and Neeraj Ghaywan, recently expressed their gratitude and admiration for one another on social media, even though their film did not win an Oscar. Neeraj Ghaywan responded by thanking Johar from the bottom of his heart and referring to him as a “absolute rock.”

“Karanjohar, thank you! You’ve been a true rock. I couldn’t have progressed this far without you. “Love you!” Neeraj wrote.For those who don’t know, Janhvi Kapoor makes a brief appearance in Homebound, which stars Vishal Jethwa and Ishaan Khatter in the key roles.

# Mouni Roy calls out “traumatizing” harassment on stage

**Mumbai:** Mouni Roy has shared details of a very distressing incident she had at a recent event in Karnal, Haryana. The actress was shaken and furious after what was supposed to be a joyful appearance. Mouni sent a thorough note on Instagram Stories detailing the alleged abuse she experienced from audience members, especially older men.Mouni Roy did not hold back in her post. “Had an event in Karnal last and I’m disgusted with the behavior of the guests, especially two uncles who are well aged to be grandparents,” she wrote at the outset. She clarified that she felt uneasy as she approached the stage. “Uncles and family members (all men) put their hands on my waist to take pictures as the event began and I walked towards the stage,” she wrote. “Didn’t like it when I said ‘sir please remove your hand,’” Mouni Roy continued, adding that she objected right away.The actor claims that once she was on stage, things became worse.

“The plot is even better on stage. Mouni Roy revealed that two uncles were standing in front of me, making obscene comments, making obscene hand motions, and calling me names. She stated that she initially made an effort to treat it civilly. “After realizing that, I politely told them not to do it, and they began hurling roses at me.” The actor even tried to quit mid-performance



at one point.

“I went to the stage exit in the middle of the performance, but I quickly returned to finish my performance,” she wrote. The behavior persisted in spite of this. “No family or organizers moved them from up front,” she lamented. Mouni Roy also mentioned how unsettling the circumstances were. It’s also important to note that these uncles were filming low-angle videos while the stage was elevated. They mistreated them when someone urged them to stop, she continued.”I am humiliated, traumatized and want the authorities to take action for these intolerable behavior,” the celebrity said, expressing how severely the

incident affected her. Mouni Roy concluded her missive with a powerful and poignant statement: “We are artists trying to earn an honest living through our craft.” Shame on you! I wonder what these men would do if their pals treated their daughters, sisters, or any other family members in the same way! She went on to say that although she generally doesn’t talk about bad encounters, this particular episode went too far.

“I adore my nation, its citizens, and its customs, but this? the heart. The privilege of being a man,” Mouni said. Regarding her career, Mouni Roy most recently appeared in the Faruk Kabir-directed JioHotstar series Salakaar.

## After the aviation regulator reduced winter flights, IndiGo vacated 717 domestic slots



**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Following significant operational problems in early December, aviation authority DGCA reduced the nation’s largest airline’s winter flights by 10%. As a result, IndiGo has vacated more than 700 slots at various domestic airports, according to sources.Slots typically refer to a certain window of time allotted to an airline for aircraft takeoff and landing. To put it simply, it involves running flights at the scheduled time.Up to 364 of the 717 slots come from six major metropolitan airports: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Ben-

galuru, and Hyderabad. According to the individuals, Hyderabad and Bengaluru have the most of the open positions among these cities. sessions with local service providers, merchants, and drivers of autorickshaws and taxis.To promote information exchange and cooperative readiness, the Delhi Police and its colleagues in nearby states are holding interstate coordination meetings. According to the sources’ statistics, IndiGo’s number of open seats is dispersed throughout the months of January through March. There are now 361 open

spots for March, as opposed to just 43 for February.In light of this, the civil aviation ministry on Thursday requested that other airlines submit their applications to run domestic flights within the times that IndiGo had left open.

“IndiGo has submitted a list of 717 slots to the ministry, which it has vacated after the domestic winter schedule was reduced by 10 per cent in early December last year,” according to a source. In response to a mandate from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to reduce last-minute cancellations

and maintain operational stability, the airline, which typically flies more than 2,200 flights per day, has reduced the number of services.IndiGo was permitted to fly 15,014 flights per week, or 2,144 flights per day, as part of its winter plan for 2025–2026.This has been reduced by 10% to 1,930 daily domestic flights. It should be mentioned that IndiGo operated an average of 2,022 flights per day during the summer. IndiGo canceled 2,507 flights and delayed 1,852 flights between December 3 and 5 of last year, affecting more than 3 lakh passengers at airports nationwide.

DGCA cut IndiGo’s winter schedule by 10% as a result of the severe interruptions, which meant the airline had ceased running services during some times.”It is evident from the slots that IndiGo has left open that other airlines can only use them till the end of March. They may return to IndiGo after that. Nobody is able to plan a network with such short notice. An executive in the aviation industry stated, “No one is going to open a sector at such short notice, operate it, and then close it after a month.”

## Coverage of the Australian Open 2026 Gives Special Attention to Virat Kohli



**New Delhi:** During live coverage of the Australian Open, Indian cricket player Virat Kohli found himself in elite company as some of the biggest names in world sport were mentioned alongside the former India captain. An image captioned “Chasing The Golden Throne: Legends Across Sports” was shown on the official broadcast during a Melbourne Park match, emphasizing Kohli’s quest to reach a historic milestone in international cricket. Fans were immediately drawn to the occasion, high-

lighting Kohli’s prominence outside of cricket. In the image, Kohli was included in a select group of legendary athletes who are striving for significant accomplishments in their fields.

Only Indian icon Sachin Tendulkar had before reached the milestone of 100 international hundreds, and Kohli was only 15 hundreds away.

The fact that Tendulkar’s name was on the list and that he accomplished the achievement in 2012 further highlights the importance of Kohli’s continued pursuit.

Kohli was paired with tennis great Novak Djokovic, football legend Christiano Ronaldo, seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton, and World Cup-winning player Lionel Messi in the Australian Open broadcast.

For Indian fans, the moment was particularly memorable because tennis broadcasts at Grand Slam events never feature cricket.

Images of the logo were quickly shared on social media, where users praised the Australian Open for acknowledging Kohli’s influence on international sport.In contrast, Kohli has recently been playing for India in ODI cricket with a commanding style. With three hundreds and a score of 93 in his previous seven ODIs for India, the 37-year-old is wearing a purple patch.

He may surpass Sachin Tendulkar’s record, a feat that appeared unlikely not too long ago, thanks to his current run of form, which has reignited the chase to 100 international hundreds.

## No Maintenance if Wife Contributes to Husband’s Inability to Make Money



**New Delhi, Jan 24:** The Allahabad High Court has ruled that a wife cannot demand maintenance from her husband if her acts or inactions cause him to be unable to make a living.A lady seeking maintenance from her husband, a homoeopathic physician who was allegedly shot at by his father-in-law and brother-in-law during a fight at his clinic, had her revision petition denied by the court.

Justice Lakshmi Kant Shukla upheld the ruling of a Kushinagar family court that denied the wife’s request for maintenance, noting that doing so would be extremely unfair, especially

since the wife’s family’s illegal actions had destroyed the man’s ability to make a living. During a fight at his clinic, Ved Prakash Singh was allegedly shot by his wife’s father and brother, which prevented him from working or supporting her. The husband’s spinal cord still has a pellet embedded in it, and the significant danger of paralysis from surgery to remove it would prevent him from sitting comfortably or continuing to work, according to the top court.On May 7, 2025, the wife’s request for temporary maintenance was denied by the family court. The man’s physical infirmity was undeniable and

directly caused by the wife’s side of the family, the high court noted in upholding this ruling.”While Indian society generally expects a husband to work and maintain his family, this case presented unique circumstances,” Justice Shukla’s court noted. “It is well settled that though it is the pious obligation of a husband to maintain his wife, no such explicit legal duty has been cast upon the wife by any court of law.” According to the court, it initially seems that the wife’s and her family members’ actions have prevented the other party from earning a living.”

A wife cannot be allowed to take advantage of this circumstance and demand maintenance if her own actions or inactions cause or contribute to her husband’s inability to make a living.”Granting maintenance in such circumstances would result in grave injustice to the husband, and the court cannot shut its eyes from the reality emerging from the record,” it stated.

## More than 30,000 workers will secure Republic Day in Delhi with AI smart glasses



**New Delhi, Jan 24:** To ensure Republic Day celebrations, more than 70 companies of paramilitary forces and more than 30,000 police officers would be stationed throughout the nation’s capital, officials announced on Friday.Security personnel will first employ AI-enabled smart eyewear with thermal imaging and facial recognition systems (FRS).A police database of criminals, suspects, and declared offenders would be instantly connected to the smart glasses manufactured in

India. This will enable local staff to quickly identify people in busy areas.”The wearable devices will connect to mobile phones used by police officers, giving them access to the criminal database,” stated Devesh Kumar Mahla, Additional Commissioner of Police (New Delhi). He clarified that if a person has no criminal past, a green box appears on the device, whereas a red box indicates a criminal record.

The security grid consists of six stages of frisking and checking as

well as multi-layered barricading. In New Delhi, thousands of CCTV cameras—including ones with FRS—have been deployed. Additionally, FRS-equipped mobile cars will be used in different locations. “Delhi Police is well prepared to tackle any kind of situation,” Mahla stated, adding that various security agencies are participating in simulated drills. Ten thousand personnel would be stationed in New Delhi especially out of the entire deployment. Every district’s DCP is ade-

quately informed on the security arrangements. According to him, police officers would be vigilant and report any suspicious activities right away.About 4,000 rooftop security posts have been designated in the North and Central districts of New Delhi, according to another officer. The parade route and its environs will have about 500 high-resolution AI cameras deployed. Security stickers will be given to every participant in the Republic Day parade.Route surveys and anti-sabotage checks have been finished by Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs). High-traffic locations like bus stops, train stations, and well-known markets have seen an uptick in vigilance.

Tenant and servant verification initiatives are among the preventive measures that are now being implemented around the city. Additionally, police are conducting “eyes and ears” awareness training sessions with local service providers, merchants, and drivers of autorickshaws and taxis.To promote information exchange and cooperative readiness, the Delhi Police and its colleagues in nearby states are holding interstate coordination meetings.

## Amartya Sen Points Out Haste in the SIR Procedure

**New Delhi, Jan 24:** Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has expressed serious concerns about the SIR process in West Bengal, claiming that it is being carried out in “undue haste” and could endanger democratic participation, especially with the assembly elections coming up in a few months.The economist considered how electoral roll modifications can increase voting rights and their democratic significance.He emphasized that such an activity needs to be carried out carefully and with enough time, which he feels are “missing” in Bengal’s situation.Sen stated, “A careful and timely review of electoral rolls can be a good democratic procedure, but this is not what is happening in West Bengal at this time.” “The SIR is being completed quickly, giving those who are eligible to vote insufficient time to submit supporting documentation for their ability to vote in the next assembly elections. He declared, “This is unfair to Indian democracy as well as to the electorate.”Sen claimed that even poll workers were under time pressure during the

particularly intensive revision in Bengal.The Election Commission officers themselves occasionally appear to be short on time.”They questioned me about my late mother’s age at my date of birth when they questioned my right to vote from my home constituency in Santiniketan, where I have previously cast my ballot and where my name, address, and other details are registered in official records, even though, as a voter herself, my mother’s details, like mine, were stored also in their own official records,” he said.The renowned economist detailed the difficulty he had with documents, pointing out that many Indians who were born in rural areas have similar challenges. “I do not have a birth certificate, and my eligibility to vote required additional paperwork to be presented on my behalf, like many Indian citizens born in rural India (I was born in the then-village of Santiniketan),” he stated.Sen voiced concern for citizens who do not receive similar aid, even though the matter was subsequently remedied.

## Ishan Kishan’s Sincere Thoughts on 32-Ball 76



**New Delhi:** Ishan Kishan, the wicketkeeper for India, made a spectacular comeback to the national team ahead of the T20 World Cup on Friday, slamming a quick-fire 76 off just 32 balls in the second Twenty20 International against New Zealand. Despite being preferred by the selectors for a top-order position over Shubman Gill, Ishan’s performance against the Kiwis in the series opener wasn’t the best. Following his arrival in the middle of

the second Twenty20 International, the southpaw acknowledged that he began to doubt his own performance. However, he is thrilled to have used runs to dispel such fears. “I asked myself if I could do it again or not. I had a very obvious response. I thought I could play good shots and bat the entire inning. To find the answers to my inquiries, I only needed to go there. “I just wanted to play good cricket, even if I got out,” he remarked following the

game.Ishan was accompanied by Suryakumar Yadav, the captain of India, with whom he had batted in the Indian Premier League (IPL) during their time as teammates at the Mumbai Indians.Ishan’s outstanding domestic cricket accomplishments won him a return to the Indian squad. The left-handed hitter gave his domestic cricket runs the credit they deserved because they enabled him to maintain the same level of performance on the international scene.”All I wanted to do was score runs. There are moments when it’s crucial to do it for yourself, to find out how you’re batting and whether you can represent India. It was crucial for me to play domestic cricket and score runs because of this. The positive aspect was that we also took home the trophy, and I brought that assurance with me. Thus, I had a fairly excellent day,” he continued.There are still three games left in the T20I series against New Zealand, so Ishan and the Indian team still have work to do.

## Bangladeshi Sports Advisor Rants About Being Left Out of the T20 World Cup

**New Delhi:** Asif Nazrul, the nation’s sports advisor, unexpectedly showed up at a Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) game on Friday as Bangladesh is in danger of being eliminated from the 2026 T20 World Cup. Nazrul, who has been outspoken about Bangladesh’s stance and called for the team’s games to be moved from India to Sri Lanka, went on a tirade on Live TV, explaining how his team is in danger of being eliminated from the competition. He emphasized that the crowded stadium, which served as the backdrop for his live interview, was evidence of his nation’s passion for



cricket. “Bangladeshi people, they love cricket, and the huge presence of the spectators is a testament to this,” Nazrul stated in the interview. “And this was actually much needed because, you know, quite recently Bangladesh has been on the verge of being excluded from the T20 World Cup.”According to Nazrul, the Bangladeshi national team’s players are be-

ing left out of the T20 World Cup despite having qualified for it.“They have the right to play there, but they are being excluded,” he stated. “So in such a special time, the huge presence of spectators will definitely encourage Bangladesh cricket and cricketers.” Surprisingly, this statement follows claims made by Bangladeshi players that the authorities of their nation didn’t even listen to them about the T20 World Cup dispute with the ICC. Without even consulting the players, the Bangladeshi administration reportedly chose not to send their team to India for the T20 World Cup.

## FIFA will give the winning club Rs 21 crore

**New Delhi:** The team that wins the inaugural Women’s Champions Cup at Arsenal’s stadium next week will receive USD 2.3 million (about Rs 21 crore) in prize money from FIFA. FIFA said on Friday that the six continental champions will split USD 3.9 million from the overall amount. A full Women’s Club World Cup is scheduled for 2028, and the final stages in London serve as a warm-up. On Wednesday at the home of Premier League team Brentford, European champion Arsenal will play Morocco’s AS FAR after American Gotham plays Brazil’s Corinthians in back-to-back quarterfinals.A third-place match will take held at Arsenal’s stadium prior to the final on February 1. Each of the losing semifinalists receives USD 200,000, while the champion receives USD 2.3 million and the defeated finalist receives USD 1 million. Auckland United from Oceania and Wuhan Chegu Jiangda from Asia, two continental champions already eliminated in previous rounds, each receive USD 100,000.

# Kalinga Lancers captain Arthur: Managed moments, room to improve after finals



**Bhubaneswar:** After his side’s win over Ranchi Royals to advance to the finals of the Hockey India League (HIL), Vedanta Kalinga Lancers skipper Arthur Van Doren spoke on factors contributing to the win, such as fine defence, communication and sticking to their processes that had got them so far. Vedanta Kalinga Lancers became the first team to qualify for the final of the men’s HIL 2025-26 after a 2-1 victory in Qualifier 1 against Ranchi Royals at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium here on Friday. The Lancers had earlier finished the league stage at the top of the standings with 16 points. Alexander Hendrickx bagged a brace to give his side a 2-0 lead before Mandeep Singh pulled one back for the Royals.

The Lancers’ progression to the final has been driven by defensive solidity. Across the season so far, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers have conceded eight goals, the best defensive record in the league. Skipper Arthur Van Doren credited the team’s discipline and collective work rate for the result. “We knew this would

be a difficult game against a side with a lot of attacking quality and individual skill,” he said, as quoted by a Hockey India press release. “Our focus was on staying compact, denying space in dangerous areas and making sure we were connected defensively throughout the match,” he added. “We were not perfect in every phase, but I think the discipline was there. Everyone put their body on the line, communicated well and stuck to the structure we have worked on all season. In these knockout games, that is what gives you a chance to win,” Van Doren added. Penalty corners have been another decisive factor for the Lancers this season. The side currently converts at 29.7 per cent, with Belgian drag-flicker Alexander Hendrickx leading the franchise scoring charts with 10 goals from eight matches. Reflecting on his contribution in Qualifier 1 with a brace, Hendrickx said the team’s defensive mindset laid the platform. “I think the key for us was how we defended as a unit,” he said. We started well, went 2-0 up and even when they came back into the game, we stayed calm and conceded only one goal,” he added. It may not always look spectacular, but it is efficient. We managed the game well, especially in the final phase, by holding the ball, making smart decisions and staying patient. That kind of composure is really important in close matches like this,” Hendrickx explained. Van Doren

also highlighted the importance of not losing sight of the bigger picture. “The competition in this league is extremely tough, and that’s reflected in how many close games we have had, including shootouts earlier in the season,” he said. “Overall, we’ve maintained a good structure and managed key moments well, but there’s still room to improve.” “Reaching the final is a big step, but it does not guarantee anything. We are focused on preparing well, improving small details and taking it one step at a time,” he added. “It may not always look spectacular, but it is efficient. We managed the game well, especially in the final phase, by holding the ball, making smart decisions and staying patient. That kind of composure is really important in close matches like this,” Hendrickx explained. Van Doren also highlighted the importance of not losing sight of the bigger picture. “The competition in this league is extremely tough, and that’s reflected in how many close games we have had, including shootouts earlier in the season,” he said. “Overall, we’ve maintained a good structure and managed key moments well, but there’s still room to improve.” Reaching the final is a big step, but it does not guarantee anything. We are focused on preparing well, improving small details and taking it one step at a time,” he added. Hendrickx reflected of the group.

# Pratika Rawal, Vaishnavi Sharma, Kranti earn maiden Test call-up for Australia cricket tour

## Pratika Rawal earns maiden Test call-up for Australia

**New Delhi:** India’s World Cup-winning star Pratika Rawal, along with left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma and seamer Kranti Gaud, has earned her maiden Test call-up for the one-off fixture against Australia, scheduled to be played in Perth from March 6 to 9. The 15-member Indian squad will be led by Harmanpreet Kaur, with the red-ball fixture set to follow the white-ball leg of the tour, comprising three T20Is and three ODIs, which begins on February 15. Pratika’s selection was widely expected after her impressive performances in the ODI format, where she has amassed 1,110 runs from 24 matches at an average of 50.45, including two centuries and seven half-centuries. Her inclusion also confirmed that the opening batter has fully recovered from the ankle injury that had ruled her out of last year’s Women’s ODI World Cup semi-final and final. However, the 25-year-old has not been named in India’s white-



ball squads for the Australia tour. Vaishnavi Sharma, who caught the eye during India’s triumph at the Under-19 World Cup earlier in 2025, made her senior international debut in December during the home T20I series against Sri Lanka. The 20-year-old left-arm spinner has featured in five T20Is so far. Fast bowler Kranti Gaud, meanwhile, made her India debut last year and has since represented the country in 15 ODIs and four T20Is. She has been particularly impressive in the 50-over format, where she has claimed 23 wickets. Mumbai pacer Sayali Satghare, who played three ODIs against Ireland

in January 2025, has been also included in the Test squad while experienced all-rounder Arundhati Reddy has missed out on selection. In the meantime, young wicketkeeper G Kamalini has been ruled out of the tour due to injury, prompting the selectors to name Uma Chetry as her replacement in the T20I and ODI squads. The selectors have also announced the India A squad for the ACC Rising Star Asia Cup, which will be captained by experienced left-arm spinner Radha Yadav. Promising batter Anushka Sharma has been included following a string

of consistent performances. Pratika Rawal was selected for India’s Test squad for the Australia tour due to her impressive performances in the ODI format, where she has accumulated 1,110 runs from 24 matches at an average of 50.45, including two centuries and seven half-centuries. Her selection also reflects her complete recovery from the ankle injury that previously ruled her out of the Women’s ODI World Cup semi-final and final. In addition to her strong ODI record, selectors recognized Rawal’s consistent contributions as an opening batter, which increased her suitability for the challenging conditions expected during the one-off Test in Perth. The Indian squad, led by Harmanpreet Kaur, will consist of a blend of experienced players and newcomers like Rawal, highlighting confidence in emerging talent. Notably, Rawal’s inclusion is specifically for the Test fixture, with her not being named in the selection.

# Hyderabad, Ranchi clash for final spot

**Bhubaneswar:** The battle for a place in the final of the Men’s Hockey India League (HIL) 2025-26 reaches its decisive stage as Hyderabad Toofans take on Ranchi Royals in Qualifier 2, scheduled to be played on 25th January, Sunday. The match, starting at 7:30 PM IST, will be a do-or-die encounter, with the winner earning a coveted spot in the Final, where table-toppers and Qualifier 1 winners, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, await. The losing team, meanwhile, will play the 3/4th place match against HIL GC. Hyderabad Toofans booked their place in this clash with a clinical 2-0 victory over HIL GC in the Eliminator, producing a composed defensive performance and making the most of their scoring opportunities to stay alive in the title race. Ranchi Royals, on the other hand, arrive after a narrow 1-2 defeat to Vedanta Kalinga Lancers in a closely fought Qualifier 1, where fine margins separated the two sides in a high-intensity contest. -High Stakes, One Final Spot With one last chance to book a berth most.

# Ladakh women reach ice-hockey final, snowfall disrupts long-track skating

**Leh:** Hosts Ladakh and ITBP women marched into the final of the Khelo India Winter Games 2026 ice hockey competition in commanding fashion on Friday. This will be a repeat of KIWG 2025’s women’s ice hockey final, according to a release. On an icy day in Leh, the 1000 metres long track finals for men and women at the Gupukh’s Pond were impacted due to heavy snowfall, the first in weeks in this Union Territory. Due to poor visibility and the condition of the 333 metres course, the women’s final was badly impacted towards the middle stages. The men’s race did not start. Defending champions Army sealed their berth in the men’s ice-hockey semifinal from Group A. Playing at their ‘home’ turf, the Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre rink, Army thrashed Jammu & Kashmir 11-0. They will play ITBP, the No. 2 team in group B, in the semifinals. Hosts Ladakh are sitting atop Group B. Both men’s semis are on Saturday. In the women’s semifinals at Nawang Dorjay Stobdan (NDS) Stadium on Friday afternoon, both Ladakh and



ITBP girls decimated their opponents with ease. The new-look NDS Stadium now has a roof, so the snowfall did not matter. Ladakh women beat Himachal Pradesh 14-0 while ITBP beat Chandigarh 10-1. The women’s final will be a repeat of the KWG 2025 final, where Ladakh defeated ITBP 4-0 in a thrilling contest. Women’s ice hockey competition started only in KIWG 2024. Tsewang Chuskit’s hat-trick and a brace each from veteran star Padma Chorol, Rinchen Dolma, Padma Desal, Samina Khatoon and Rigzin Yangdol left Himachal Pradesh completely flattened. We have won all four matches so far in KIWG 2026. Even though I am the captain, we have seniors guiding us on the ice and in

the locker room. The younger girls are also playing well and scoring goals. We have a good coach, and his strategy worked in today’s match. Also, the UT Administration’s support in our training has been tremendous, and the selection process was conducted through trials in both Leh and Gargil,” said Ladakh skipper Yangdol, adding: “We are excited for the finals, and we will hopefully lift the cup once again.” Dechen Dolker’s hat-trick was the highlight of ITBP’s win against Chandigarh in the second women’s semifinal. Tashi Dolker and Sharap Yangset scored apiece. But television ratings have slumped and sponsor interest has waned. Expressing confidence ahead of the opener, Sonipat Stars’ top player, Ayan Lochab.

# Kabaddi Champions League season opens with thrilling, high-voltage double-header encounters

**Rai:** The Kabaddi Champions League (KCL) is set for a grand opening with an exciting Day 1 double-header on January 25, as two high-intensity matches light up the mat at the Sports University of Haryana, Rai, marking the official start of the league. The action begins at 7:00 PM with the inaugural match between Sonipat Stars and Gurugram Gurus. The historic opener brings together two strong Haryana teams eager to make the first statement of the season. Sonipat Stars will look to rely on their disciplined structure and tactical execution, while Gurugram Gurus are expected to counter with aggression, athletic raids, and an attacking mindset. With history on the line, the opening clash promises energy, emotion, and high-intensity kabaddi, as per a KCL press release. Expressing confidence ahead of the opener, Sonipat Stars’ top player, Ayan Lochab, said, “Playing the inaugural match is a proud moment for us. We have the home advantage and are keen to bring a blockbuster opening match for the fans. The team is well-prepared, and we are focused on setting the right tone for our KCL journey.” Gurugram Gurus’ leading player, Neeraj Narwal, shared the excitement, stating, “This is a big stage and the perfect opportunity to make a statement. We are ready to play fearless kabaddi and give the fans an exciting start with the first-ever match of Kabaddi Champions League.” The excitement continues at 8:00 PM



as Rohtak Royals take on Karnal Kings in the second match of the day. Rohtak Royals are known for their composure and organised defensive play, aiming to control key moments in the contest. Karnal Kings, on the other hand, bring confidence and attacking flair, with quick raids and sharp counterplay expected to keep the pressure on throughout the match. Sharing his thoughts ahead of the contest, Vijay Malik, Rohtak Royals’ key player said, “Our focus is on staying composed and executing our plans. The opening match is important, and we want to start the season on a positive note.” Sunil Malik, Karnal Kings player, added, “This is the moment that we have been waiting for. The team has dreamt of this moment, and we are ready to make it a reality. We believe in our attacking strength and solid defence and are ready to compete with full intensity from the first whistle.” With league points at stake and momentum crucial in the early stages, both fixtures are expected to deliver competitive, fast-paced action. Day 1 not only marks the beginning of KCL’s journey but also sets the tone for the thrilling matches to follow. This content is sourced from a syndicated feed and is published as received. The Tribune assumes no responsibility or liability for its accuracy, completeness, or content. Karnal Kings, on the other hand, bring confidence and attacking flair, with quick raids and sharp counterplay Expected to keep the pressure on throughout the match.

# Sunil Gavaskar details how Suryakumar Yadav successfully rediscovered his golden batting

## Gavaskar reveals Suryakumar’s technical transformation

**New Delhi:** Legendary India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has revealed the major technical shift that helped Suryakumar Yadav regain his form. The India T20I skipper looked back to his vintage best as he registered his first half-century in the format after 468 days and 24 innings. Suryakumar played a scintillating knock of 82 off 37 balls, laced with nine fours and four sixes, to help India chase down their joint-highest target in T20Is. He walked in to bat with India in a precarious position at 6/2 after 1.1 overs and went on to stitch a massive 122-run stand off just 48 balls with Ishan Kishan, who scored 76 off 32 deliveries. After a cautious start to the innings, managing 11 runs from his first 11 balls, Suryakumar completed his fifty off just 23 deliveries. Following his



return to form, Sunil Gavaskar highlighted the major change in Suryakumar’s technique, pointing out how the India captain was looking to play straighter, which helped him score runs early in his innings. He was on 11 off 11 deliveries. So in that partnership of 122, 76 were scored by Ishan Kishan, but that also shows the skipper’s maturity. Here was another man who was batting so well, so he was giving him more of the strike as well as getting his eye in, and there-

fore getting himself ready for the big push. Once Ishan Kishan got out, he was the one who took the initiative and started punching the ball, and besides everything else, the driving through the off side was the big plus because that means that he’s looking to play straight as much as possible. Then once you’ve got that, this shot can come into play. That was a fabulous innings and a big boost for the Indian team on the eve of the World Cup,” said Gavaskar on Star Sports

Gavaskar also mentioned that it was a major shift in mindset for Suryakumar, who had been getting out early in his innings while attempting extravagant shots on the leg side or behind the wicket. “Yes, it’s a mindset thing because, look, he started his T20 career with that scoop shot for a six off Jofra Archer. So you might think that this is the shot that is giving me all the runs, but no. When you look to play straight down the pitch — and Simon just mentioned that the on drive wasn’t the easiest of shots to play — but he played it so well, with so much time and freedom. It gives you that feeling as a batter when the ball hits the middle of the bat. You just feel that much more confident, and you could see his confidence grow with every ball that he spent at the mindset thing because.